An investigation of the Intersection of Tongan Culture and the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga's Education System

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this research study, to the best of my knowledge, is original except as acknowledged in the text and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed : .....

Date : ..... August, 2016

Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and , to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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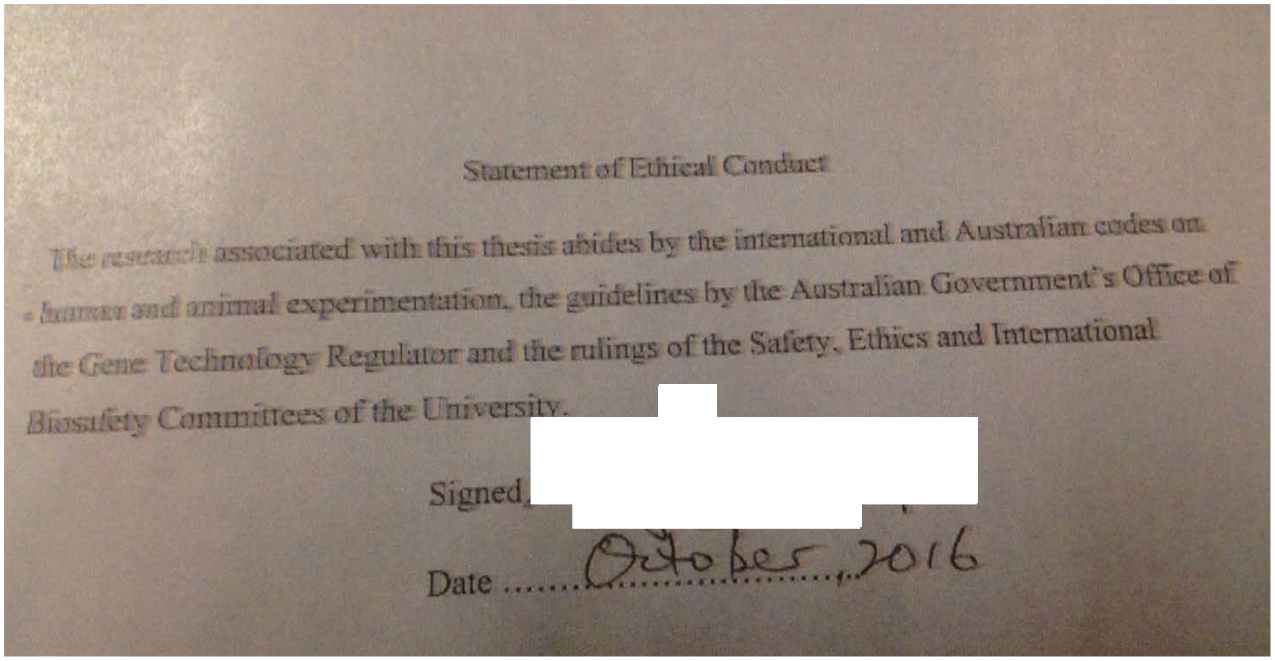

Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and International Biosafety Committees of the University.

Signed [redacted]

Date ..... October, 2016

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is part of my own story and that of the people with whom I worked and researched in Tonga. The research paradigm is action research and both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used to distil an understanding of education change in Tonga. In essence, there are cultural factors which make educational change difficult to enact and from an outsider's perspective this can be difficult to comprehend. From an insider's perspective, however, cultural identity and cultural roles have helped to define and articulate Tongan values and to describe who the Tongan people are. Culture has also provided a rich social network which has helped to sustain the Tongan people as they transition and interact with the wider world.

There are, therefore, elements of historical research (such as that by Campbell) and ethnographic research (such as that by Thaman) embedded in this semi-longitudinal study of education and leadership in Tonga through my work with teachers and school principals. This thesis, therefore, does not follow the traditional positivism model that is more linear in focus; rather it follows the action research paradigm that knowledge formation is iterative and that investigators need to explore the narrative and the discourse from a number of perspectives and over time.

In part, this action research study tells of my growing awareness that, if the people of one culture (in this case, Tongan) wish to make changes in a facet of its society, it is by no means assured that somebody outside that culture can contribute significantly and directly to that change.

In 2009, as a volunteer education consultant with an Australian non-government agency, I was invited by the head of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System

to ‘improve’ the classroom skills of its teachers and to design a five-year strategic plan for the System. So, the first major question I addressed is:

1. What changes might be suggested to the leaders of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System which could enhance the quality of education in the System?

The answer starts with a description of Tonga – its geography and its history, its social and hierarchical structure and various facets of its culture, including two key facets, religion and education (Chapter 2, Part B). There is limited academic literature related to Tongan education but there are historical documents and policy statements to which reference is made throughout the thesis. This action research takes into account the experiences and understanding of the stakeholder teachers, school principals and education officers.

The description of Tonga is followed by an outline of my own experience during five, three-month visits which I made to the country over five years (Chapter 3, Part A). Among other things, this experience led me to conclude that the issues I had been encountering could be addressed in a descriptive research thesis.

During those visits, various aspects of Tongan culture were acting both for and against the so-called ‘improvement’ sought by the senior officers of the education system. Therefore, a second question emerged:

2. What cultural factors affect the degree to which changes are implemented?

A culturally appropriate process of ascertaining the desired knowledge and views was designed and carried out. Chapter 3, Parts B to E to and Chapter 4 explain the method and the results of this process which included interviews with nineteen education officers, school principals and deputy principals. The results include interview responses which demonstrated

a deeper knowledge and understanding of the issues involved and an implied preparedness to be involved in the changes many of the interviewees regarded as desirable. Most of the telling comments were about attitudes, hierarchy, limited resources to implement change, leadership that was linked to Tongan values and an economy that struggled to sustain its people using Western criteria.

Thus, the final question I address in this thesis is:

3. What are the most realistic strategies for improvement and how might the System implement them?

Chapter 5 addresses this question. For the most part, the answers came from the leaders of the education system – the principals, the deputies, the education officers and the people who have cultural 'authority' to bring about change. A problem is that they are in a tension. Do they look to an education system that is modelled on Western values and expectations or do they keep with a Tongan education system which respects the past, hierarchy and traditional teaching methods focussed on drill and examinations? Tonga is in transition and the tensions of that transition are reflected in the voices of the participants in this action research study. It appears that schools are struggling to construct 'relevance' for their students, as more of them leave the kingdom for work and other opportunities in Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

The evidence from this study suggests that the solution to the teaching problems perceived by the education leaders in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System lies within themselves. Outsiders have a role to play but it is, at best, a secondary one. The Western system cannot be imposed and Tongans are unlikely to accept a solution that is inconsistent with their values. Western ideas and resources may be offered to the Tongan education leaders but they are empowered to select from this array and, in the end, work

together with a range of stakeholders to find the best fit that respects their values and provides opportunities for the future of their young people.

GLOSSARY

Tongan Terms

anga fakatonga	the traditional Tongan custom
fakatonga	the Tongan way
faka'apa'apa	respect
fakafiefiemalie	laid-back way of life
faifekau	ordained church minister
hou'eiki	nobility, chiefly
Ikali Tahi	Sea Eagles, the Tongan national rugby team
kainga	clan, extended family
kakai	commoner
misonali	annual financial gift to the church
nopele	noble
palangi	or *papalangi*, white person, a descriptive word
palani	plan
a pongipongi	tomorrow
talanoa	story-telling, talking
Toloa	wild duck; the star constellation
tu'i	king
umu	big, family, Sunday meal, much of it cooked in the ground
visioni	vision, as in 'looking forward'

English Terms and Abbreviations

FWCT	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

President	President (Director) of FWCT Education System
System	FWCT Education System
MEWAC	Ministry for Education, Women's Affairs and the Arts
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
THRDM	Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement
TNCC	Tongan National Council of Churches

Other Languages

a capella	(Italian); unaccompanied singing
bêche-de-mer	(French); sea slug
Crux	(Latin); the star constellation - the Southern Cross
hiraeth	(Welsh); a feeling of sadness, between homesickness and nostalgia
hoi polloi	(Greek); lowly ranked people
le fin mot	(French); the gist, the main point
soto voce	(Italian); soft voice
quo vadis?	(Latin); Where goest thou?; What is your next step?

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This tapa cloth (Figure 1) was designed and created by students of Tupou College, Toloa, Tonga and depicts traditional Tongan motifs as well as three modern logos – that of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System, that of the review document mentioned in the text and that of UnitingWorld, an Australian organisation which supports the FWCT.

Figure 1 Tapa Cloth

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF INTENTIONS, RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis tells of part of my personal story and it relates a voyage of discovery. The story begins when I became involved in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System (FWCTES) as a volunteer education consultant with an Australian non-government agency in 2009. For three months in each of five consecutive years, I worked in the System helping its leaders plan for its future and to help develop the classroom skills of teachers in the System. In due course, it became increasingly clear to me that various aspects of Tongan culture would have a huge impact on any changes to be considered and that a Western system and techniques could not simply be transferred to a different culture.

The thesis is structured in a way that acknowledges that few outsiders are familiar with Tonga and its culture and that the academic literature about the nation and its education scene is not extensive.

So, after a brief consideration of a relevant ecological theory (Chapter 2, Part A), it begins with an appropriate description of the country (Chapter 2, Part B, Tonga Context):

- its geography and history;
- its government and present economy;
- various social matters such as social structure, language, Chinese residents, sports and the arts, health and law and order;
- the key areas of religion and education.

Partly because of the relative scarcity of literature about Tongan education, this thesis does not include a traditional literature review. Rather, references are used frequently

throughout as they refer to matters being described or discussed in this and in subsequent chapters. From time to time, vignettes are included to illustrate points made.

Part B is followed by a chronological account of my five visits (Chapter 2, Part C, The Review, the Plan and the Implementation) and which addresses my first research question:

1. What changes might be suggested to the leaders of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System which could enhance the quality of education in the System?

This chapter points to my growing awareness and understanding of Tongan culture and some of the changes which were being experienced by teachers and leaders in the System. While involved in these visits, I decided to record my experiences and research as a doctoral thesis. My experiences led me to my second research question:

2. What cultural factors affect the degree to which changes are implemented?

Chapter 3 addresses this issue.

Action research is most appropriate

To carry out this research, I needed to use a method which reflects cultural understanding and which was suitable in the particular setting. Thus, a participatory action research approach seemed to be the most appropriate. The action research approach I've taken is something of an amalgam, following Stringer (2014).

- It is ethnographic in that I have explored the nature of Tongan society and culture;
- It is critical and descriptive in that I sought to identify which aspects of that culture are likely to affect teacher performance and

- It reaches towards positivism in that I have used an appropriate methodology for gathering data.

Thus, the amalgam (X) is located within a triangle of approaches:

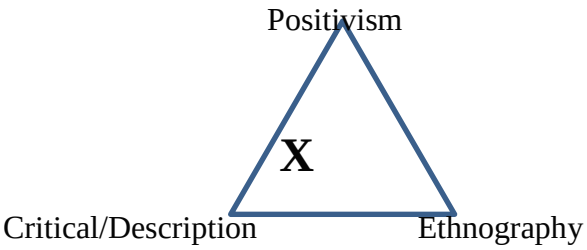


Figure 2. The location of this thesis among three research approaches.

The approach is participatory in that the Tongan education leaders were involved in all stages of this action research, from the initial observations, the resulting actions, the consequent revision of plans, then the reflections and observations and actions and plans and so on, in a cyclic fashion. Stringer (2014) described this process:

> Action research works on the assumption … that all stakeholders – those whose lives are affected by the problem under study – should be engaged in the process of investigation. Stakeholders participate in a process of rigorous inquiry, acquiring information (collecting data) and reflecting on that information (analysing) to transform their understanding about the nature of the problem. … This new set of understandings is then applied to plans (p. 15).

McNiff (2001) identified several stages in an overview of action research:

1. A critical point in practice has been reached.

2. A new direction is needed.

3. Avenues for new directions are chosen.

4. Monitoring and evaluating new directions.

5. A change is direction occurs in light of these evaluations.

As my work in Tonga evolved, those stages could be observed:

1. The FWCT Education System leaders were dissatisfied with the System's teaching and learning outcomes.

2. They invited me to review the situation and design a strategic plan.

3. I carried out the review, designed a plan, disseminated them and provided training.

4. The lack of changes could be observed in subsequent years and this lack could be connected to cultural issues.

5. I sought the opinions of practitioners and then made those opinions known. One interviewee advised me to "give the ideas and plans to the Tongan leaders and let them do with what they would, or not do".

Of course, action research is not always linear and stages 4 and 5 were repeated a number of times.

The approach which I have used is also somewhat akin to autoethnography, as described by Ellis et al. (2011), which contains elements of autobiography and ethnography. Autobiography in that it is about my own experiences, ethnography in that it is a study of a culture's relational practices, common values and beliefs and shared experiences for the purpose of helping those within the culture to achieve certain ends and to help people outside the culture to understand the culture better. Ethnographers do this by becoming participant observers. That is what I sought to do through action research.

Chapter 3 of the thesis is an account of the method I used for data collection to ascertain the Tongan education leaders' views of the FWCT Education System and its capacity to change and Chapter 4 is an analysis and discussion about the results of the data collection.

That analysis and discussion leads to a consideration of my third research question:

3.What are the most realistic strategies for improvement and how might the System implement them?

My conclusions and recommendations (described in an imagined conversation) arising from my research appear as Chapter 4.

Throughout my five years working in the FWCT Education System, it became increasingly clear to me that if there were to be any improvements (or, indeed, any changes) in the System, they would need to be brought about by the Tongan leaders of the System. Throughout recent decades *palangis* (white people), including me, have tried to review and guide but with little discernible effect. One leader in the System said to me: "The Western system can't be imposed and Tongans won't let it be imposed. Give it to the Tongan leaders and let them do with it what they would, or not do anything with it. The underlying thing is Tongans have to take the reins of their education system".

Townsend and Bogotch (2008) are likely to agree with this Tongan:

> If all education requires a measure of cultural and contextual understandings, then uniform, standardised programs and lessons will not meet the needs of all children and communities. … If educational practices are best performed by those closest to the problems, then why do we not prepare and continuously develop teachers and administrators to grow intellectually and politically to make wise decisions? (Townsend & Bogotch, 2008, p. 5).

For any changes to come about, whether it is improvement in classroom teaching practice or any other facet of the System, someone or some people will have to take some initiative. Therein lies a problem. Addison (1716) mused: “When men are easy in their circumstances, they are naturally enemies to innovations”. Tongan leaders in the System have demonstrated limited interest in taking the actions which would bring about changes. Certainly, there have been a number of ‘reviews’ of the System by palangis (white people) invited to do so and plenty of recommendations have been made. Little change resulted. In my own case, recommendations made after extensive local research with support from System leaders during my first visit led to the (to me) surprising realisation during my second visit that almost nothing had changed.

It appeared that teachers and principals in schools were waiting for the leaders to take some initiative and provide leadership.

People of lower rank are unlikely, however, to voice an opinion as it is thought to be impolite or disrespectful. One educator said to me that “I feel our system is really constrained by all the conformity and control and anyone who tried to put their head above the parapet gets slapped down very quickly to keep quiet”.

So, if leaders were reluctant to lead change and others were too intimidated to show initiative, how could change ever come about? What are the aspects of Tongan culture which have an impact on improvement of the System? It had become clear that only Tongans, especially the leaders, could address these questions and take subsequent action.

I decided, then, instead of suggesting ways to ‘improve’, or at least Westernise, the practices of teaching and learning, it would be preferable to seek the views of some of the leaders in the System. If they could identify issues, perhaps they, themselves, could find the answers they search for. Because of the reluctance of low-ranked teachers to voice opinions,

the people most likely to contribute substantially in this search were the leaders - education officers, school principals and deputy principals. So, I set out to ask them about the interface of culture and teaching improvement. I also decided to record my experiences and findings as this doctoral thesis.

Because Tongans, even leaders, are frequently reluctant to voice opinions, I adopted a three-stage data collection procedure to lessen this reluctance and to ascertain their views. The first stage involved a discussion with nine education officers which resulted in a list of aspects of Tongan culture which might have an impact on the improvement of teaching performance in the System. During this discussion, the nature of each aspect was explained to me. The second stage involved a group of 44 officers, principals and deputy principals and it was to sort and prioritise these cultural aspects from most significant to least significant. The third stage, by which time most of those people who were involved had become comfortable with discussing the issues, was for me to interview 19 leaders individually.

This three-stage procedure, along with the thoughts of various writers (especially those writing about matters associated with the meeting of cultures) gave me some insights into the difficulties being faced by educators in a time of transition from traditional to modern practices. As a result, I reached some conclusions and feel able to make some recommendations which emanated with Tongan practitioners, one of whom said to me "Culture can get in the way of a good education".

My aim in this endeavour was to help the senior officers of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System to improve the standard of classroom teaching in its schools. My first objective was to ask the education leaders within the system how they believe the Tongan culture affects teaching and learning practices and how the standard could be

improved; my second objective was to inform the System's senior officers of the views of the education leaders.

I here restate my three research questions to which I sought answers and indicate the chapters in which they are considered:

1. What changes might be suggested to the leaders of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System which could enhance the quality of education in the System? (Chapter 3, Part A).
2. What cultural factors affect the degree to which changes are implemented? (Chapter 3, Parts B, C, D and E and Chapter 4).
3. What are the most realistic strategies for improvement and how might the System implement them? (Chapter 5).

In this action research, I took into account the experiences and understanding of those people centrally involved in the issue explored – the stakeholders.

The epistemology of this research

Although there are a number of different epistemologies and perspectives and conditions under which educational research can be described and classified, one common feature is that the research is typically field-based social science research where the classroom or the school is the setting and not the laboratory (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Morrison, Manion, & Cohen, 2017). Thus, the education research setting is typically multivariable and so the ability of the researcher to account for one single interaction is difficult in such a dynamic and multidimensional context. Those educational researchers who adopt an epistemology that variables can be controlled and a single hypothesis established and tested can be classified as adopting an objective, positivism methodology. Those educational researchers who adopt an epistemology that variables are difficult to control and that a single hypothesis does not capture the complexity of the social interactions that are formed over time, tend to follow an anti-positivism methodology.

In the following thesis there are elements where data are collected via a quantitative methodology, such as survey data, so that there are aspects of a positivism methodology approach included. Even so, the overall epistemology of this research fits more within a qualitative methodology that relies more on interview and observational data collected over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Such an epistemology requires the researcher to interpret meaning and knowledge from this socially constructed data [see Morrison et al. (2017), for a review of qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures]. If a general epistemology label is required, the following research is better described as “mixed”. This is because this longitudinal, social, field-based research uses both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures and develops its knowledge of the variables and the context under investigation using both objective (positivism) elements as well as subjective (anti-positivism) elements.

Action research

As noted above this social science, longitudinal research, conducted with school leaders in Tonga has strong elements linked to qualitative methodology where the researcher is constructing and interpreting "meaning" from and with the stakeholders over time. In this context the researcher is refining and clarifying a working hypothesis, rather than evaluating a single hypothesis. As new information is obtained from the stakeholders the researcher reviews the working hypothesis, which may be adapted based on this new information. This cycle of establishing a working hypothesis to be investigated and then reviewed and then re-evaluating over time, could be described as a series of linked sub-projects. Or, it could be considered as one research project and the clarification of the knowledge surrounding that project is shaped and formed over time. That is, the researcher is working to form a "gestalt" of the issue being investigated. Researchers who subscribe to the latter can be considered as action researchers (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cook, 2006; Hien, 2009; Morrison et al., 2017).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) in describing action research, argued that there are three conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for action research to be said to be present and these are listed below.

1. The project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible to improvement.
2. The project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.
3. The project involves those responsible for the practice, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.165-166)

The Tongan education leadership project reported in this thesis satisfies all three of Carr and Kemmis' (1986) criteria.

1. The project was working to bring about improvements in a social practice, i.e. an education structure and operation.
2. The project was of a cyclical nature, where a working hypothesis was refined over time as new information was collected and interpreted.
3. The project was designed to ensure that the stakeholders were involved in and responsible for the improvements they were seeking and affected by the new practices.

This cyclical nature of action research in an educational context has been identified by Hien (2009) (see Figure 3) as involving five steps that are repeated as required, with Step 5, "general findings", helping to review and reform the initial Step I of "diagnosis or identifying the problem". It is interesting that Hein used the terms "diagnosing the problem" rather than "hypothesis formation" as suggested by Morrison et al. (2017). The use of the terms "diagnosing the problem" although having more of a medical overtone does suggest that data are being used to construct and formulate a greater understanding of the extent and nature of

the problem under investigation, even at the initial stages of the action research project.

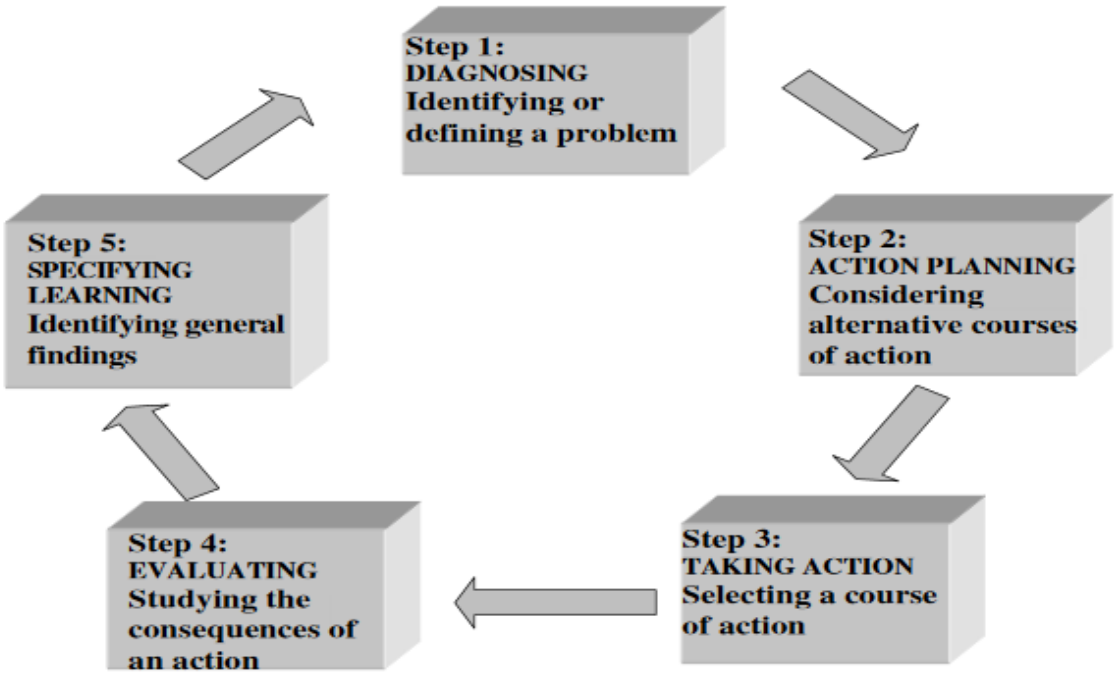


Figure 3. Hien's (2009) five step cyclical action research model for education

The indications are that as the cyclical process evolves, new insights develop and the next planning stage is emended. The overall research plan can be modified in small or large ways to clarify the problem under investigation and identify possible "solutions". That is certainly what happened in the Tonga project reported in this thesis. The consequence is that, in practice, the cyclical process of action research makes for a "messier" research design because even at the initial stage of diagnosing of the problem and hypothesis formation, often the full extent of the issues to be investigated and who are the stakeholders and their role is still being well identified (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Hien, 2009; Kember & Kelly, 1993). Cook (2006) in reviewing action research maintained that there is not always a "neat" starting point to the project, in part, because the researcher/s are not always wholly aware of which aspect of the research is the core concern at the start of the project. This point has been described as "mess, bumbling, jumble, untidy, and free flowing" by Cook (2006, p. 102).

Kember and Kelly also made a similar claim stating: “in practice, the process of action research is messier than the neat diagrammatic representations.” (Kember & Kelly, 1993, p. 5). They also claimed that in action research there is often no “neat” starting point to the project which also fits with Hien’s (2009) interpretation that action research is a process. From an action research perspective understanding the context of the research and its historical, cultural, and social setting is vital in the action research process. Certainly in the research reported in this thesis the Tonga cultural and its history influenced how the key stakeholders operated and this will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Kember and Kelly (1993) also maintained that when writing up an action research study the previous theoretical literature review is often less relevant, than it would be in a positivist hypothesis driven study. In comparison to traditional research where the theory is reported and tested and a hypothesis accepted or rejected, in action research the theory evolves and it is clarified as the research processes. Thus, it more likely that it is only at the end of the study that the action researcher is in the best position to make a claim as to what are the variables in the study and how they interact and this interaction can be generalised into a “theory” or “truth” as to what is occurring. The claim is action research is a challenge to these research models that promote change in specific situations rather than discover “truth” and derive general laws (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Kember, 2000). It also focusses on finding a solution and not simply identifying a problem.

Understanding the context is important in action research

From a positivism methodology perspective the ability of the laboratory-like research project to be replicated is an important consideration to validate the results (Morrison et al., 2017). In social science research this ability to replicate a previous finding is not always easy. This is because the variables have changed. In terms of educational research, a different cohort of students, teachers and parents and school leaders is typically present when

comparting two research studies, even when similar instruments are used. That is, the two contrast groups are likely to have some level of difference in each or all of these following domains: experiences and histories; aptitude and motivation; values and beliefs; home factors; support and resourcing. Such differences increase the possibility that different stakeholders respond to a survey, an interview, a context, or a setting in different ways (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Morrison et al., 2017). Understanding the longitudinal and dynamic context of the research setting and the range of stakeholders involved, is a core aspect of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Efron & Ravid, 2013; Stringer, 2014)

This focus on the participants in action research increases the likelihood that any intervention or change will have more ownership by the participants who are the core stakeholders and the researcher can identify a generalizable solution that can be considered as relevant to someone working with a related problem or issue (Morrison et al., 2017; Stringer, 2014). This notion of action research working towards a generalizable solution means it recognises that as the context changes then the likelihood that a previous solution can be replicated is reduced. It also acknowledges the importance of the researchers who are dealing with the "problem" or issue, to individualise the solution to the stakeholders they are investigating. Sometimes the term "personalised" is even used, rather than "individualised" when considering the fitting of a solution to a specific cohort of stakeholders (Stringer, 2014). That is, the researcher is expected to form a working hypothesis that can be adjusted based on how the stakeholders' respond, with the outcome a generalizable solution that can be further reviewed and tested as new information is obtained from the stakeholders (Hien, 2009; Stringer, 2014). The formation and review of a generalizable problem and a generalizable solution means that the action research is dynamic. This process can be illustrated in this research thesis by reviewing the five visits I undertook to Tonga and how over time both the problem that I was asked to deal with and my understanding of the stakeholders and their

context became clearer. I do not believe that I had “mastery” of the full problem or “mastery” of a solution. I had a working hypothesis that changed based on my changing interpretation of the issues and the stakeholders. The final generalizable solution was, at best, an approximation of what could work with this specific cohort of stakeholders. This notion that action research deals with approximation may be an unsatisfactory outcome for those researchers looking for the “right answer”, but as Stringer (2014) argued, action research is in part open-ended because it is working in a changing social and naturalistic setting with changing stakeholders that influence the formulation of a generalizable solution. This reflects the reality that the problem is also generalizable because the context and the participant stakeholders are dynamic.

In action research the focus is on the process and the formation of a working hypothesis so that out of this research a generalizable solution, interpretation, or even a theory may emerge (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Hien, 2009; Morrison et al., 2017). This process is illustrated using my Tongan school leadership research as the case study of an action research project.

1. During the first visit, the “messy” stage, it became obvious that stakeholders - school leaders and principals - did not know which education officer to contact regarding any particular matter and, as a result, often did nothing. Furthermore, the officers showed little commitment to their work, possibly because they didn’t know what was expected of them. So, the Panel writing the strategic plan suggested that job titles and job descriptions be allocated and that principals be told about this.

2. During the second visit, it was clear from observations that nothing had happened to change the confusion. So, after discussions, the Panel proposed some specific titles and descriptions which were accepted as appropriate.

3. The third visit revealed that still nothing had changed. A new senior officer with different skills and attitudes had been appointed, however, and, given the experience and recommendations from previous visits, he agreed to address the problem and plan some advances.

4. By the fourth visit, this new senior officer had established the titles and descriptions (though not exactly the ones proposed the previous year – he had used his own knowledge of the System and the individuals) and had allocated them among the other education officers.

5. The final visit revealed that the new arrangements were operating successfully. Officers were becoming better informed and more enthusiastic about their duties and principals had a better understanding of the situation and could act more positively. Appendix F (page 298) depicts the new organizational structure. In the data-collection section of this thesis and especially the interviews, it was apparent that leadership issues were of concern for many of the participants and it is hoped that that situation could be ameliorated somewhat by the solution described above.

So, through a cyclic process of observing, reflecting, acting, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, a generalizable solution was hypothesized to the problem and, importantly, found and acted upon, by the stakeholders. The main conclusion was that change is unlikely to happen unless the Tongan educators took responsibility for it, which is one of main points articulated by Kember (2000).

Use of social qualitative data

As noted already, this research project used both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures but because of the longitudinal nature of this social research, the study used interviews as observation strategies for data collection. These personal observations and

social interactions and conversations with stakeholders are relevant and significant as data that can be interpreted by the researcher. It is acknowledged that such data may be considered more subjective in its interpretation than, say, survey data (Morrison et al., 2017). In terms of data sources, Efron and Ravid (2013) identified five sources of data that action researchers working in an educational context need to consider. These data sources are: (1) interview data; (2) observational data; (3) survey data; (4) artefacts and documentation data; and (5) assessment data. Across this thesis each of these data sources is considered. The notion that artefacts and documentation are important sources of data in action research needs to be stressed. In this thesis there is an extended review of historical documents that may seem somewhat redundant in a traditional hypothesis-driven research thesis, but this review of the history of Tonga and the power relationship between kinship groups and stakeholders provides the extended backdrop that helps to explain and clarify why culture, hierarchy and even fatalism are all elements that influenced how the participants in this study behaved, thought, and responded to school leadership and change. From this data collection perspective, artefacts and photographs are important and original sources of data, along with video and written vignettes where individual Tongans tell their story (Morrison et al., 2017). Such records can help fill a knowledge gap, where there is a dearth of relevant written and recorded literature. For instance, a photograph of a sign outside a Mormon Tongan school declared: “English only spoken here” provides evidence of the lower status of the Tongan language in this English language only school setting. Similarly, a vignette about the aftermath of a boat tragedy indirectly speaks to the fatalism which (I believe) is a core attribute of Tongan culture. This acceptance that this is what happens and is beyond one’s control encourages a passivity towards many of the problems that occur in Tonga, which does have limited financial resources and has a strong village hierarchical culture. My observation is that this fatalism has an impact on the Tongan teachers and those in authority in

implementing educational change. Interpreting photographs and vignettes is a subjective process, but such resources are still a meaningful source of data. These data help in the formation of an understanding of the context and the factors that influence peoples' thinking and behaviour.

The generalizable solution and action research

In all, the research reported on in this thesis has an action research focus, with the data collected over a substantial period of time that allowed me, as researcher, to observe and formulate a "gestalt" of what was happening over time. The reality is that this researcher was operating within a naturalistic, culturally and socially specific context and trying to process cognitively a range of different data sources in the diagnosis of the problem and the formation of a working hypothesis was an ongoing process (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Hien, 2009). Certainly, this research is supportive of the notion argued by Stringer (2014) that when social change is being examined, the researcher needs to consider a range of multi-dimensional variables that operate within a larger dynamic system. Such an environment requires the researcher to form and reform working hypotheses based on testing, working with and understanding those variables in action. The outcome is that the generalizable solution that has greater ownership by the participants and stakeholders helps in the formation of richer understanding and interpretation of the issues under investigation.

In action research, data are collected over a substantial period of time and allows the researcher to observe the 'gestalt' (whole), of what is happening over time, rather than in a selected (and perhaps, arbitrary) time-slot. When social change is being examined, a range of multi-dimensional variables that operating within a larger dynamic system, need to be considered. Thus, action research is an appropriate methodology when interacting with stakeholders linked to the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System to identify a

generalisable solution to a poorly defined problem associated with enhancing that System over five years.

A Focus on Tonga

Thaman (2007), a Tongan academic, claimed that "Sociologists … assert that role expectations, learned and internalised through the process of socialisation, help guide people's behaviour and social interactions, and when people of different cultural backgrounds use their own individual cultural clues to define and interpret role expectations of others, role conflicts often result." (p. 55).

Thaman developed a personal philosophy and framework for teaching and research that is sourced from the Pacific culture and values. Her depiction is a metaphor; she wrote of *kakala*, a collection of fragrant flowers (*toli*), woven together (*tui*) as a garland for a special person or special occasion (*luva*).

Kakala provides a philosophy (as well as a methodology) of teaching and learning in that it requires a person to use knowledge that is sourced both locally and globally so that he/she may weave a garland that is meaningful, appropriate and worthy to be passed on. Kakala may also be used as a framework for understanding Pacific students and a way of contextualising teaching and learning in order to make them more culturally inclusive and democratic (Thaman 2007).

This is precisely the reason the views of the stakeholders need to be considered and valued and why they are significant in this thesis.

As will be reviewed in Chapter 4, Part C, many Tongan educators whom I interviewed emphasised the importance of professional development if their education system were to produce improved outcomes. To date, many of the attempts to provide professional

development have been west-inspired; perhaps the work of Thaman (2007) and other Pacific educators needs greater prominence. Manathunga (2009) noted that there is a need for South Pacific teachers and educators to have a greater dominance of their own research agenda and not just copy and follow those set in Westerner countries. Manathunga (2009) suggested that a Pacific education system underpinned by socially-critical theoretical perspectives, particularly ones linked to understanding and ameliorating the tensions between local cultural issues and globalisation would be a useful one.

> Pacific education system underpinned by socially-critical theoretical perspectives, particularly deconstructive ones, can better respond to the twin challenges of creating universal and equitable access to education and arresting the loss of language, culture, identity, and life skills via rapid globalization.

Gorinski (2007) stressed "it is critical … that (Pacific) teachers engage in ongoing activity to update and expand their professional knowledge bases, in addition to improving or reviewing their practices to ensure they are best meeting the learning needs (of their students)" (p. 476). Gorinski went on to discuss New Zealand research within the Maori culture and identifies some implications which probably would apply in a Tongan setting for teacher development. These implications are in the areas of improved efficacy in teacher professional development, relationship building, involvement of leadership, facilitator knowledge and skill, research methodology and an acknowledgement that building leadership takes time.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

PART A – CULTURE AND EDUCATION CHANGE

This treatise is about changing an aspect of education in a very specific situation – improving the teaching qualities of teachers working in the FWCT Education System. From my own experience in Tonga, an island kingdom in the Pacific Ocean, I have come to understand that a Western system cannot be simply transferred to a very different situation.

Bruner (1996) argued that: "education does not stand alone, and it cannot be designed as if it did. It exists in a culture" (p. 28).

Any plan to change an education system, or even one facet of it, especially a Tongan one, needs to take into consideration many aspects of the relevant culture. Although there is but a limited field of literature specifically about Tongan education, there is much to be adduced from more general sources, including the New Testament, as may be discerned as the story unfolds.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

The idea that a person's cultural context influences that person's actions and thinking links easily with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1992) ecological model of development. He argued that there are four broadening circles which surround an individual and which he called the ecological system. The present study is about the views of school principals and other educators, and those views reflect the influences on individual principals. Firstly, there is the microsystem – that principal's school and its members. Secondly, there is the mesosystem which is the wider school network, the local village or town context in which the school is located and the line managers outside the school that direct policy and procedures as well as the principal's professional and support networks. Then there is the exosystem, which is the

government's policies and practices that influence funding and other resources. Finally, there is the macrosystem which is the culture in which the principal operates.

Of particular importance in this research is the claim by Bronfenbrenner (1979) that a cultural group shares a common identity, heritage and values that influence the individual at the micro, meso and exo system levels. He noted that, while the macrosystem is the most stable, it does evolve over time. Each generation must interpret the values and structures of the traditional culture in relationship with other macro forces from outside the home culture. For example, the role of the Wesleyan church has been linked strongly with Tongan culture during the past two centuries. This might evolve as Tongan culture may reflect more of a secular and materialistic society and culture. Bronfenbrenner added a further ring, the chronosystem – time.

Bronfenbrenner's theory makes a number of appearances throughout this thesis. For instance, the following is a consideration of the relevance of the theory in the context of an individual Tongan teacher and plans for developing her skills.

The Teacher (Malia) and Bronfenbrenner

A typical (albeit fictitious) teacher named Malia lives in a village in Tongatapu, the main island of Tonga. She is 45 years old, is married and has five children. Her husband does not have regular paid employment and spends a good deal of his time in his garden where he grows various fruits and vegetables and raises several pigs and some chickens. Her mother and several other relatives live within a couple of kilometres of her home.

Malia is a poorly trained and largely unskilled mathematics teacher in an FWCT high school located about ten kilometres away. Usually, the only way she can travel to school, into

the capital, Nuku'alofa, or to the hospital is by local bus. She is a member of the church and attends services and other church activities regularly.

Malia is in reasonably good health although she is overweight and diabetes is starting to cause her some concern. The main hospital is about eight kilometres from her village and there is a small health clinic and a pharmacy just a few hundred metres from home. Malia's children are greatly loved but they are a little malnourished and suffer the usual array of childhood illnesses. Three of the children attend the local government primary school and the other two are cared for by their maternal grandmother during school hours.

Like most Tongans, Malia has many friends and acquaintances living nearby; she has good relationships with several women with whom she spends considerable time. Her husband has a number of friends and joins them in a kava circle twice each week. The family includes a number of relatives living in Auckland, New Zealand.

In financial terms, the family is poor. Malia's salary is small and her husband makes almost no money although his garden saves his extended family some expenses. Fortunately, her house is provided by the FWCT. Another issue is the fact that she is a female.

There seems little point in considering ways in which Malia can develop her classroom teaching performance unless all the above matters are considered. They affect her motivation and her energy levels. Even getting to work on time each day can be a challenge.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) argued that the environment in which a person operates is important because development may be shaped by their interactions with that specific environment. For instance, in the case of Malia, even if it is thought that attendance at a professional development session would help her and she would like to attend, nothing is likely to happen unless it is made possible for her to travel to the site where the session is to

take place. A village funeral or a church activity close to home are cultural matters which might also lessen her availability for the session. On the other hand, *faka'apa'apa* (respect for someone in authority) is a strong aspect of Tongan culture and, if the President of Education asks her, specifically, to attend, she will feel an obligation to be there.

As explained above, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework views development as influenced by five environmental systems (in addition to the individual), ranging from proximate contexts of direct interaction with people to broad-based contexts of culture, all occurring over time. The environment is perceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of matryoshka (Russian) dolls. Figure 4 can help to explain the theory:

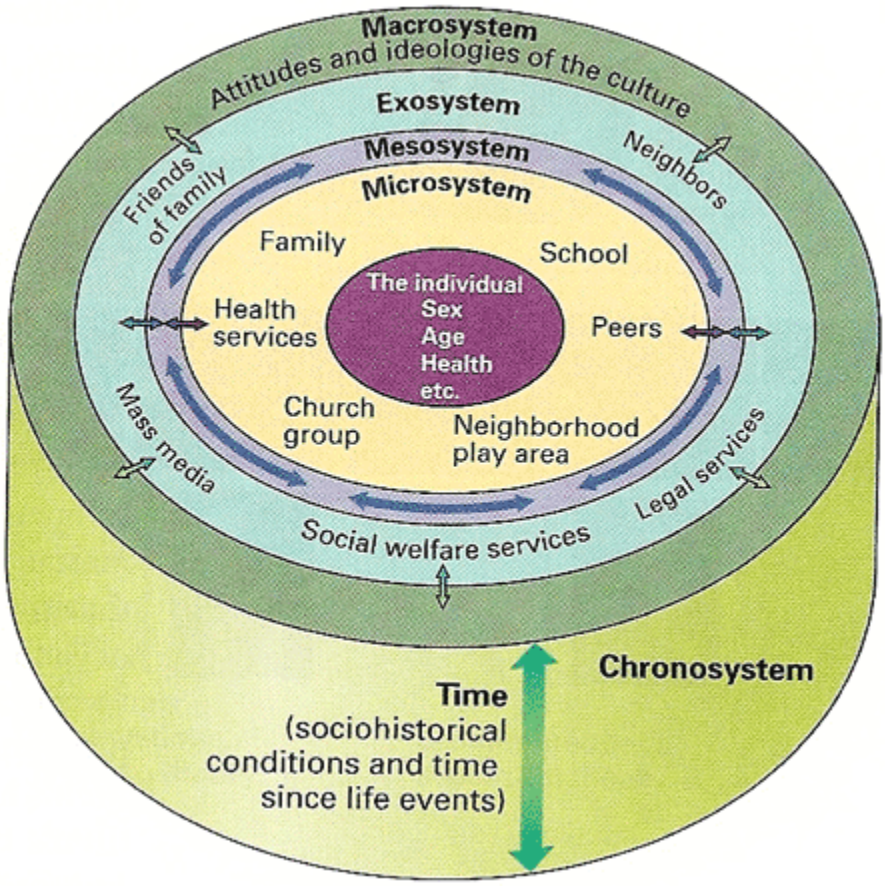


Figure 4. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological framework theory.

This theory refers to most of the matters mentioned above about Malia at the individual and microsystem levels affecting her functioning and helps to clarify her world. The interconnections among the microsystems Bronfenbrenner calls the mesosystem. These include interactions among the kava circle members, between Malia's family and the church, between the family and the children's government school teachers and between the children's peers and the family. Further out from the individual and the immediate surroundings is the exosystem. This includes local/village politics, social services, mass media and any local industries – all aspects of life which affect Malia but not in the immediate, personal way the closer systems affect her.

The macrosystem describes the culture in which individuals live. Members of a cultural group share a common identity, heritage and values. In the case of Tongans, it refers to those commonalities with the Tongan diaspora as well as with those who continue to live in the kingdom.

Time, or the chronosystem, has a prominent place in the development model and it is evident at three levels. Micro-time refers to what is happening during specific episodes closely affecting the individual (such as taking a sick child to the hospital). Meso-time indicates the extent to which processes occur in the person's environment over the course of days, weeks or years (such as a course of professional development). Macro-time focusses on the changing expectancies in the wider culture and might function across lifespans or even generations (such as the increasing use of the English language throughout the country).

The outer rings of the model refer to the more stable, slowly evolving characteristics of Malia's world and the inner rings to the more changeable, personal, more immediate ones.

Bronfenbrenner pointed out the role that personal characteristics of individuals play in social interactions and provided a rationale for how environments influence personal

characteristics (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). So, in this present context, his theory explains why the Tongan environments at the exosystem and macrosystem levels can limit any attempt by individuals to improve teacher performance. He also suggested, however, that personal characteristics ***can*** change environments (Tudge et al., 2009). In this case, if personal characteristics such as the drive to succeed and persistence in the face of resistance are strong enough in the right people (especially those with high rank), improvements in classroom teaching skills are not impossible.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicated that the interactions between an individual and the context are bidirectional. A person's dispositions, aptitudes and demands on the environment all shape the course of development and that person ***can*** select, create and modify his/her own experiences.

Limitations of Bronfenbrenner's model and its links to Tonga

Bond (1997), however, was critical of aspects of Bronfenbrenner's model and the lack of emphasis in the model of the individual making rational choices as to which aspect of the social network that individual will focus on and respond to. Although Bond is supportive of Bronfenbrenner's notion that acculturation is an ongoing process which can act as an agent that typically maintained the cultural status-quo, Bond also suggested that Bronfenbrenner's theory is too often interpreted as a passive model and that the individual is locked into a specific context and role. Bond (1997) writing about acculturation, added to Bronfenbrenner's theory by stating: "human behaviour cannot be accounted for solely on the basis of ecological adaptation: external influences are an essential (and possibly increasingly important) source of influence" (p. 144). For Bond the person has agency and can shift between contexts and make a conscious and rational decision to listen selectively and respond to different stakeholders particularly at the mesosystem and other external levels.

Bond's point is also illustrated by Thaman (2007) who suggested that the wider external factors, such as the global media can too often "flood" the local Tongan cultural context with the local cultural having limited influence on of this strong external agency. Specifically, the content of Western movies and television programs may suggest that the more material-orientated Western culture is more exciting and financially more rewarding than the local Tongan village cultural context with its stronger focus on sharing, family and kinship values. This tension about who has agency on the individual or school and how Tongans make rational choices around which aspects of the wider cultural context they will listen to and respond to, is a core aspect of this study. If there is a tension between the Western school practices and values and the traditional Tonga school practices and values in which direction do the Tongans schools and teachers go?

Cultural tensions

This two cultures tension is not a new concern and it has been explored by other researchers such as Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006); Manathunga, 2009 and Nisbett (2003). Nisbett, researching Asians and Western societies, made the distinction between relatively independent self orientated societies (Western) and relatively interdependent kinship societies (Asian). He noted that while in theory these are separate, both influenced each other. For example, in some Asian business decisions the independent model is to select who is the best person for the job, but there may be influences in play within the interdependent model, such as who in the kinship group who needs to be considered? Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) maintained society groups can hold dual cultures in balance as 'progress resistant' when faced with the need to adapt. That is, the traditional cultures typically work at absorbing selected aspect of the new culture, but are attached to the old so that much of the old culture is maintained. For example, in the Tongan context, aspects of parliamentary government have been adapted to the traditional hierarchal leadership Tongan clan system. That ability of

Tongans to change but still maintain their essential kindship values is a feature of Tongan history (Daly, 1999; Samate, 2007). In essence, it has involved balancing the tensions between a traditional village economy and life style on one hand with a world economy and international life style on the other (Manathunga, 2009; Samate, 2007). This Tongan adaptation to Western influences will be reviewed more in the following chapter.

Tongan context and entry into the project

This thesis, then, is about which aspects of Tongan culture impact on teachers' choice. The author was invited by the Wesleyan Tongan school authority to help the improvement of teaching and leadership performance via the use of professional development. This invitation was issued because the author of this thesis had been a school principal for many years in Tasmania, and after this had worked as an education consultant in the UK, where he worked with school principals to enhance aspects of the curriculum particular as it related to diversity in the classroom. The invitation was through connections between the Uniting Church in Australia the Tongan Wesleyan church. The Australian Uniting church rather than the Tongan church provided financial support. Bringing in an ex-principal with Western school leadership experiences formed in Australia and in the UK can have the effect of privileging Western schooling practices over the Tongan schooling practices. Therefore, in this action research study and as the author of the resulting thesis, I acknowledge that I am not culturally neutral. Stringer (2014) noted that this needs to be acknowledged and how the action researcher enters the project can and does influence the level of commitment and information that researcher receives from the stakeholders. The cultural aspects identified by local practitioners are explained more in Chapter 4.

These is a school of thought that bringing in outside experts to run professional development in places such as Tonga has its limitations and it needs to be culturally sensitive

if change is to be maintained. In particular, Gorinski (2007) and Thaman (2007) both argued that while teacher professional development is important for the Pacific Island teachers, the need is for a Pacific Island oriented professional development. Similarly, Nisbett (2003) suggested that Tongans would find it difficult to act and think like Westerners even when professional development was provided by Western "experts" because the Tongan process this Western information through a Pacific island cultural context and perspective, for they are imbedded within the Pacific Island culture.

This need for the researcher to be sensitive of the culture in which the research project or professional development is to be implemented, is one of the advantages of using an action research model, as sensitivity to cultural context is an important aspect of this research approach (Manathunga, 2009; Stringer, 2014).

Schooling concerns and leadership in Tongan schools

As noted already, this thesis is in-part an example of action research where the interactions of the researcher with the participants over time influenced the findings and the outcome of the research (Morrison et al., 2017). It is worth stating again that one of the core purposes of this thesis was to document my (the author's) experience in Tonga on the invitation of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System to assist principals and teachers in Wesleyan schools to become more effective in their tasks. Concern about schooling in Tonga is supported by researchers who have questioned the overall quality of the education provided in Tongan schools. These concerns include:

1. inadequate teaching and learning resources (Ministry of Education and Training, 2014);
2. a shortage of qualified teachers to teach in specific subject areas, such as mathematics (Tatafu, Booth, & Wilson, 2000);

3. a curriculum that poorly matches the needs of the students, particularly in the secondary schools (Pohiva, 2014),
4. limited professional development and upskilling of teachers in the schools (Finau, 2017; Tatafu et al., 2000);
5. an inadequate Tonga teacher preparation program (Finau, 2017);
6. poorly prepared and supported principals of Tongan schools (Ministry of Education and Training Tonga, 2017);
7. over reliance on formal end-of-year examinations to grade and classify students' academic performance in traditional curriculum areas (Finau, 2017; Pohiva, 2014),
8. low socio-economic home and community factors common in Tonga, along with high levels of poverty in some areas (Tatafu et al., 2000);
9. a school examination culture and system that reinforces rote learning (Pohiva, 2014),
10. a lack of innovative teaching and learning approaches that contribute to reduced students' motivation to continue in school and study higher order content subjects (Finau, 2017), and
11. a concern about the overall quality of the Tongan educational outcomes for students and the quality of the school leaders (Tongan Ministry of Education &Training, 2017).

Finau (2017), quoting Tongan school data from 2013, noted that only 26% of Tongan students had acquired a completed secondary education qualification, although 63% had some secondary schooling. The claim was that these high early secondary school leaving rates were related to the students' lack of ability to learn and master the required school content, students' lack of interest in what they were doing in the classroom, the teachers' limited pedagogical approaches that poorly suited the students' learning styles and the students' resistance to the schools' rules and behaviour expectations.

The Tongan Ministry of Education and Training (2017) identified the three key roles for the principals of Tongan schools and these are: (1) the administration of their schools; (2) the management of their staff; and (3) the shaping of education outcomes for students. This list suggests a "top down" management focus model of school leadership where the external government or school system authority have established guidelines around the behaviour and expectation of schools, principals, teachers and students.

Given the number of concerns listed above which, both directly and indirectly, relate to long term financial concerns and entrenched system level structures, one has to question if a Tongan principal has the flexibility and resources to implement change. Even so, the Ministry of Education and Training recognise that not all of the Tongan school principals were coping fully with their roles and added in the following statement on how this could be enhanced using greater levels of support and mentoring. "Mentorship and support for secondary school principals in Tonga have been identified as vital for ensuring they are able to realise their full leadership potentials for the benefit of their staff and schoolss" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2017, webpage).

The Tongan Ministry of Education also identified that enhancing school leadership was strongly linked with enhancing the academic achievement of all Tongan students and with enhancing the likelihood that the principals would better meet the expectations and aspirations of parents and the wider Tongan society**.** This government authority noted that more effort had to be placed on preparing and supporting school leaders. They quoted one school leader who stated that: "When we come into positions as principals, we are rarely given the training. So, we kind of go through a trial and error period, which is not good for our staff and students" (Tongan Ministry of Education and Training, 2017, webpage). This recognition of the importance of the leadership quality for Tongan school is a core aspect of this research study.

Thus, this research has a context and a purpose that can be exported from a number of perspectives. Certainly, the Tongan school system identified that the principal of the school was the central source of administration in that school context, but also that the principal was the central source of the leadership and school change in that context.

The school principal the key to school change

A recurring claim in the school change literature is the importance of the principal of the school in the process of implementing and maintaining positive school and teacher change (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Mulford, 2003; 2008). Fullan (2001) asserted that: "I know of no improving school that doesn't have a principal who is good at leading improvement" (p. 97). Some of the key qualities associated with the more effective school principals include: being strategically orientated; using school improvement plans; being child instruction focussed; dealing with incoherence within the school; and leading schoolwide professional communities of teachers who review, adapt and experiment with their practice (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Mulford, 2008).

Teachers rated poorly those principals who were perceived simply as managers and who provided little support or direction for teaching and learning in a school. Principals who were rated more highly were those who nurtured and sustained strong teacher communities focussed on students' well-being and learning. Individual teacher development is not sufficient in itself. There must also be schoolwide development and peer support because social relationships and ongoing resourcing are keys to maintaining teachers' motivation to change and to improve their classroom practices (Hattie, 2009; Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017). Thus, schools must combine individual development within the context of the development of schoolwide professional community.

Fullan (2001) maintained:

> The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result (Fullan, 2001 p. 100).

Furthermore, Mulford (2003) investigating school leadership in Australia identified excellent potential principals who had decided not to pursue a career in school administration, suggesting that being a school leader was not always an attractive career choice for some teachers. The reasons given were related to societal, system and school issues. Of particular concern was the group's perception that principals could not function as meaningful agents of change. They perceived that 'head office' had centralised so much power over educational matters and imposed so many policy and curriculum related changes in such a short period of time while simultaneously cutting resources that principals could have limited in-school impact. Unless the principal has some level autonomy, authority and support, the principal has limited opportunities to direct and maintain school change (Mulford, 2008).

It is claimed that it is the principal who enables school change, both at the schoolwide level and at the individual teacher level (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Day, 2008; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Mulford, 2008). When there is effective communication between the principal and the teachers, along with ongoing support and interaction about instruction processes, teachers have the opportunity to build a repertoire of flexible teaching strategies, rather than just following established teaching techniques and methods (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Day, 2008). Principals do this in a number of ways, including talking with teachers to promote reflection, making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, using inquiry and soliciting advice/opinions and by giving praise. Even classroom visits ('walk throughs'- what Australians might call 'management by walking around' (Mulford, 2008)) without dialogue

or feedback by principals had positive impacts on teachers' motivation, self-esteem and reflective behaviour, including better planning/preparation, focus and greater innovation and creativity (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Hattie, 2009).

School leadership and change

As noted, school leadership is considered an important aspect of effective teaching and student learning (Day et al., 2009; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Mulford, 2008; Palestrini, 2000). The claim is that the first step for education change is the fostering of a climate for school change and the principal is very important in nurturing and promoting this climate (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994). In addition, Day et al. (2009) argued that effective schools were more likely to have effective leaders and it was the quality of the leadership at the school level, rather than at the centrally-generated policy level, that made the difference. The assertion is that it is at the school level that the school leader can support teachers to make wise, timely and contextually focussed strategic decisions that have an impact on the students' learning (Day et al., 2009). Policy is important, but in order to improve students' outcomes, it is the quality and moral purpose of principals which make the crucial difference in the effectiveness of schooling and school change (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994; Palestrini, 2000; Mulford, 2008).

The Wallace Foundation on School Leadership (2013) maintained that school principals must be the leaders of learning for both the students and the teachers. This foundation identified five key leadership responsibilities of the school principal that needed to be addressed if a school were to change and be more effective and these five points are listed below.

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.

2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision.
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost.
5. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

Across these five points is the assumed notion that the school principal is the central source of leadership influence in the school. The list also suggests two points, first that the principal of the school has the authority to operate with some level of autonomy and independence, and second that school change is easy to implement.

Unfortunately, the reality is that school change is complex. On this point, Hargreaves, Liberman, Fullan and Hopkins (2010) reviewed the status of school change and they noted that real change in schooling practices were often infrequent and episodic and typically policy changes often did not affect or even address the core issue of how and, at times, what teachers taught. They suggested that policy changes often assume that education and schooling is homeostatic in nature. Hargreaves et al. claimed that a chief difficulty or barrier to school functioning has been the enduring mentality of significant parts of the teaching profession itself and those who administer the school system who either consciously or unconsciously often act as gatekeepers in order to maintain the status quo. That is, the principal of the school often had limited real authority to operate independently of others. An issue, then, that needs to be considered is: Does the Tongan school principal who operates within a complex cultural context have the authority to influence and implement school change?

It is asserted that it is almost impossible to separate a specific schooling system from its social, historical and cultural contexts (Fink & Stoll, 1998; Lawton, 2012), when one of the core purposes of education and schooling is to transmit the knowledge, values and skills that are deemed important to those who provide the schooling. This interconnection between school practice and education policy often puts the school leader in a position where the principal needs to deal with competing demands and expectation from a range of stakeholders both within the school, and from the school system in which the school operates, as well as from the local and wider school and governance authorities (Hargreaves et al., 2010). Balancing these different stakeholders is a school leadership challenge and so even the questions about: "What form of change is expected and wanted of the school and by whom?" are not easy questions for many principals to respond to (Fink & Stoll, 1998). Lawson (2012) has argued that educational change is considerably easier to talk about than achieve, and school and educational systems tend to be homeostatic in nature. Certainly, schooling practices and even education research are not value free (Morrison et al., 2017). Rather, school leadership and schooling and how they are practiced in different situations is linked and often driven by the socialised values and the culture of the people who design, pay for, and maintain that specific schooling system (Lawson, 2012).

School change and dynamic cyclical model of teacher development

Since mid- 20th century, professional development has gained importance as a school-changer (Howey & Vaughn, 1983). The nature of the emerging training style implied a deficit in teacher skills and knowledge; much of it consisted of 'one-shot' workshops or seminars designed to redress the lack of prescribed skills and knowledge. Researchers including Guskey (1986) and Wood and Thompson (1980) have pointed out the ineffectiveness of programs which stress this deficit approach. In time, there was a change of focus from 'changing (passive) teachers' to programs which assumed that teachers are active learners

shaping their own professional growth (Fullan, 1982). This change was in a Western (mainly American) setting; it was not necessarily happening elsewhere.

Fullan (1982) observed that many professional development programs did not consider the process of teacher change. Such programs attempted to change, first of all, the beliefs and attitudes of teachers with the expectation that such changes would lead to changes in classroom practices and improved learning outcomes. The implied process was that the person providing the professional development had to change teachers' beliefs before teachers' would change their practice (see Figure 5).

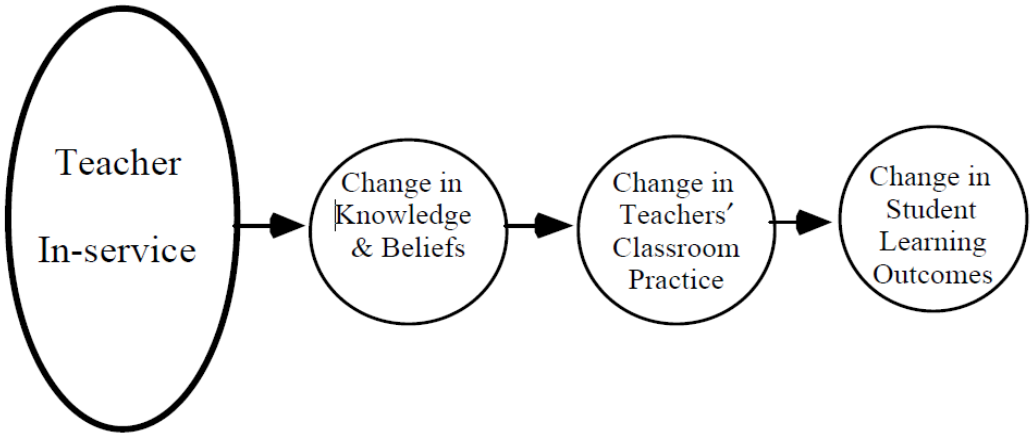


Figure 5. An implicit model of the purpose of teacher professional development

In contrast to Figure 5, Fullan (1982) and Guskey (1986) perceived teachers' professional development process differently. They claimed that significant changes in beliefs and attitudes were more likely to take place *after* the changes in students' learning outcomes were evident to the teacher (Figure 6). That is, a change in teachers' beliefs about how content could be taught changed after it had been validated in the classroom and in practice and the teachers themselves had experienced that this change in their teaching had worked in their classroom.

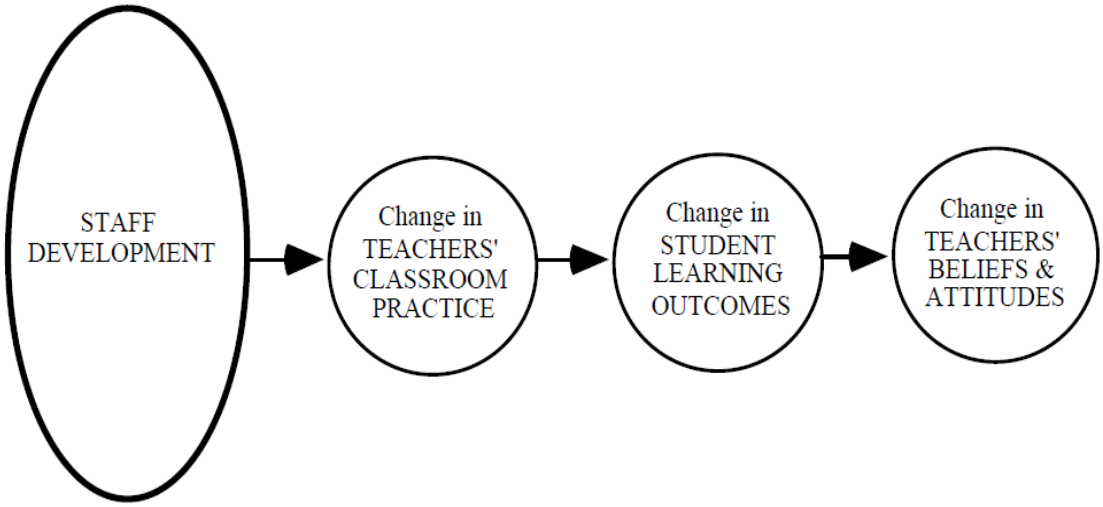


Figure 6 Modified model of the process of teacher change.

Clarke and colleagues (Clarke & Peter ,1993; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017), investigating teachers' professional development have claimed that there needs to be strong links between ongoing professional development and teachers' own experiences and reflections on enacting professional development in the classroom. They have argued that teacher change occurs across four interconnected domains: the personal teacher domain; the domain of teacher practice; the domain of teaching consequence; and the external domain (i.e., feedback from peers, parents, the community, the principal) and the processes of teacher reflection and 'enactment' of knowledge and procedures occurs across each and as a collective see Figure 7.

The Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) interconnected model of teacher growth is a more complex model and suggests that feedback and information can come from a range of sources that can influence teachers' practices, beliefs, and knowledge. It also suggests that teachers' professional development is ongoing and dynamic. Importantly, it still maintains that for teacher professional development to move from just receiving information to enacting change, the teacher has to operationalise and engage with this new information within the

classroom context. This model also suggests that there are other external variables and factors that influence teachers' ability and willingness to engage with change and accept or reject the teacher professional development they receive (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017).

In some ways, the Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) dynamic cyclical model shares some features with Hien's (2009) five step cyclical action research model for action research in education (as previously shown in Figure 3). Both models have multiple entry points and each part of the cyclical process can influence another part, over time. They also accept that education change is a complex process that involves the teachers operating within a dynamic and social context involving a range of interacting stakeholders.

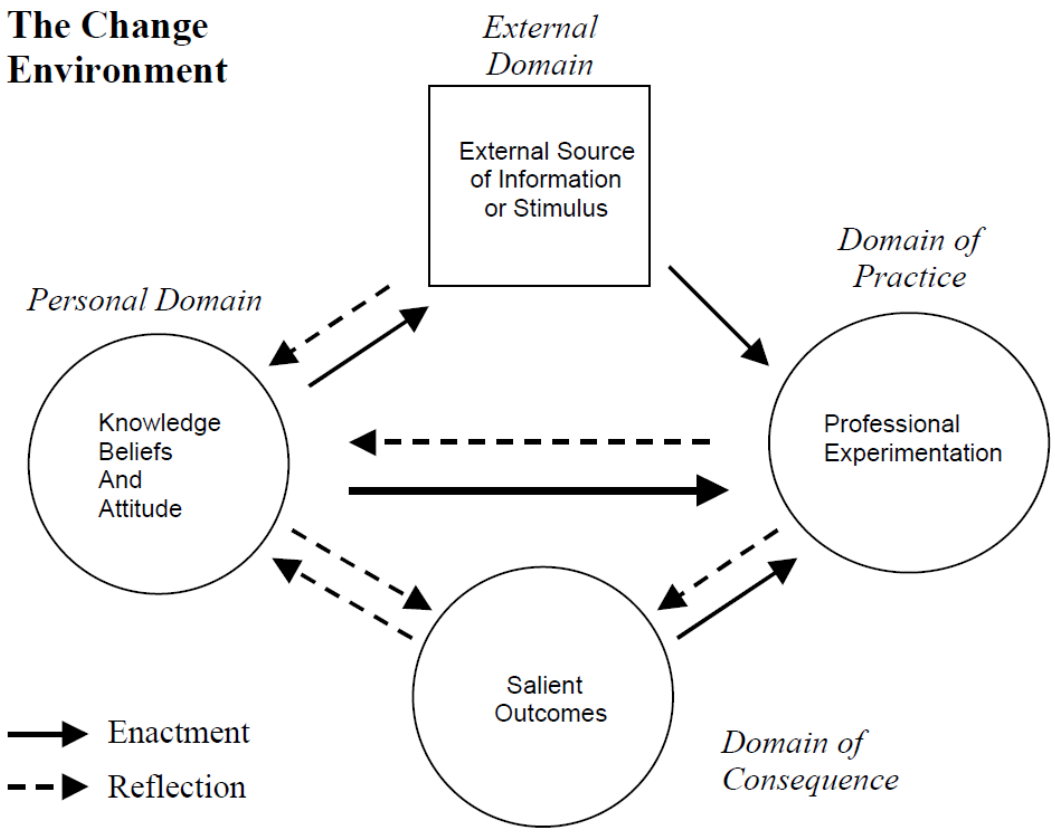


Figure 7, The interconnected model of teacher growth across four school area

Interconnected model of teacher growth

The interconnected model of teacher growth model strongly suggests that teacher growth and professional development does not occur in isolation but that it occurs in a context and it includes teachers sharing and interacting with a community of colleagues and others. In this context, teacher growth is brought about by the evolving practice of the teacher that is refined by classroom experience, experimentation, feedback, and reflection over time. This process model is claimed to produce lasting change in teachers' practice because the teacher has validated this practice and knowledge within their own classroom setting (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017). This is distinct from momentary change which is more short-term and yet to be tested and validated by the teacher over time. Again, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) assert that, for teachers to engage in professional experimentation and refinement of their teaching practice, teachers need to reflect on the consequences of that experimentation and initiate further modifications or refinements of their practice. They stated that "we must employ a model of teacher growth that does not constrain teacher learning by characterising it in a prescriptive linear fashion" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 965).

Tonga and professional development

This notion that teachers need time to reflect and review their practice with peers and others is a theme across the research study with Tongan teachers along with the notion that Tongan teachers' professional development cannot in considered in isolation but as one element within a set of variables that influences ongoing practices within the classroom. In terms of external factors Hill (2007) writing on the Tongan situation noted that teachers were expected to follow new directives with limited support to implement policy-driven changes resulting in limited real change in classroom practice. In addition Hill reported "a pyramid-

style social structure in which orders are transmitted downwards from the top, and 'backchat' from the lower levels is regarded not as a natural democratic right, but as dangerous" (Hill, p.221). This top down model of teacher change is in contrast to the model suggested by Hollingsworth and Clarke (2017) who argued that for sustained change to occur in the classroom, teachers need to share and interact with a community of colleagues and others and experiment with the new content or practice so that over time they validate and adapt it to their own classroom context.

Tongan schools and Tongan cultural values

The notion that schooling practices are not culturally neutral, is not a new concept and it has been explored under a heading that was identified in the early 1970s as "socialised cultural anthropology in education" and led by researchers, such as Bantock (1968) and more recently by Lawson (2012). From the "cultural anthropology in education" perspective, culture is seen as central to the understanding of human relationships and acknowledges the reality that members of different cultural groups often have unique systems of perceiving and organising the world around them. This means that the ways in which individuals are socialised directly and indirectly influences their behaviours and ways of thinking. In schooling this manifests itself in the way teachers think and interact with their students and the way the wider school community interacts with the teachers and the school leadership. Lawton (2012) suggested that people's own view of their culture and their place and position within their culture influences their attitudes towards education in general and the curriculum in particular. Education and schools are thus considered to be important agents in the transmitting of cultural values from one generation to the next. This transition of culture is considered to be independent of the regular curriculum, knowledge and skills being taught and is sometimes referred to as the "hidden" curriculum (Bantock, 1968; Lawson, 2012). For example, while knowledge of basic mathematical number facts may be a goal of many different

educational systems, how tolerant teachers are to noise and talk in the classroom, the level of drilling involved in the teaching of the number facts, and how the students show respect to the teachers and to the values of that society can differ. Therefore, from this socialisation perspective any school change, and in particularly ones that are from the "outside" or are in some level of "conflict" with the established values and perceptions of those in authority, are unlikely to be fruitful and be maintained (Lawson, 2012).

In terms of Tonga, Finau (2017) reported that religion, particularly the Christian religion, was deeply integrated into Tongan society and into the Tongan education system, an issue that will be reviewed in more detail in this thesis. Quoting Tongan school data Finau noted that the Tongan secondary educational system relied heavily on a range of Christian religious schools, with approximately 30% of the student population attended government schools and the remaining 70% attended church-based schools. This integration into Tongan society of religious values suggests that the school leaders will need to balance the Tongan curriculum needs along with the church's and the wider community's expectations.

One of the few published researchers who have investigated Tonga context and its education practices is Thaman (1993) who argued that Tongan teachers' own view of their culture and their place within that Tongan culture influenced their attitudes and practices within the classroom. For Thaman, Tongan teachers and the school leaders are important members of the social hierarchy and order of the village. As a consequence, where a teacher and the school leader is located in relationship to the authority of the village chief and the related village elders, can directly and indirectly influence the school's educational practices. That is, the authority to make change may not lie fully with the school principal, but it is a shared authority involving a range of stakeholders, many of whom are external to the school.

In the islands of Tonga, as in other parts of the South Pacific, such as the islands of Fiji, the village hierarchical structures and its interconnected families are still a dominant factor in

maintaining the cultural norms, roles and expectations (Tikoduadua, 2014; Tuinamuana, 2007). Therefore, while it may be true to say that the principal of the Tongan school is the school leader, it seems less true to say that the principal is the core driver of school change as suggested by some school leadership researchers (Wallace School Leadership Foundation, 2013). In the Tongan village context, the principal's ability to be the driver of change has its limitations; some of these are financial but some of these limitations reflect the wider context within which the Tongan school principal has to operate (Thaman, 1993).

Thaman (1993) writing about Tonga, identified and stated that culture is taken to mean: "the way of life of a discrete group of people, including its body of accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills, beliefs and values" (Thaman, 1993; p. 2). Following the tradition of cognitive anthropology researchers, such as Bantock (1968) and more recently Lawton (2012), culture is seen as central to the understanding of human relationships and acknowledges that members of different cultural groups typically have unique systems of perceiving and organising the world around them. This means that the ways in which individuals are socialised influences their behaviours and ways of thinking. In other words, the way in which people and their social network perceive the world around them is socialised and maintained within a particular cultural context (Lawton 2012). For Lawton and Bantock, education is the passing on of culture that can be independent of the specific knowledge and skills being taught. From this perspective school change needs to be considered within an education framework and needs to be understood from within a cultural, historical and social network. Thus, in terms of schooling, any change is school practice or content needs to be understood within a cultural and social context (Lawton, 2012).

Referring to the Tongan context and its education practices Thaman (1993) argued that as a developing country with limited resources but with well-established cultural practices, Tonga was caught in a tension. That is, Tonga wants both positive change and prosperity and at the

same time to hold on to its traditional values and culture. In terms of education, at one level the government and those in authority want the children of Tonga to progress and become citizens of the world yet still operate within the values of the Tongan cultural norms (Thaman, 1993). This tension of trying to live in two worlds - the Western one and the traditional South Pacific Islander one - is not unique to Tonga, with more recent researchers investigating the Fiji context and education also noting similar tensions (Tikoduadua, 2014; Tuinamuana, 2007). This tension or balance is a core issue in this research and although it is now some twenty years since Thaman (1993) wrote the following quotation, it is still a relevant issue in any investigation involving Tongan cultural and its education context.

> Pacific islanders need to have access to Western cultural capital in order to survive in a world dominated by Western ideas. Hence, it is necessary to learn of foreign ways and values in order that we may more effectively compete in an increasingly competitive world. This is not to suggest that we, in the islands, stop teaching about other cultures and their ways; indeed, we have successfully adopted or adapted many foreign ways and made them our own. What is being advocated, however, is a conscious effort to look more closely at our traditional cultures for new insights into and solutions for some of our most vexing social and educational problems. The need is to balance Western ideas with small indigenous cultures with their spiritual value systems, their community lifestyles, interdependence, family solidarity and harmony with the natural environment. (Thaman, 1993, p. 252)

PART B - TONGA CONTEXT

In 2009, the President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System invited me, as a volunteer with an Australian non-government organisation (UnitingWorld, an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia), to carry out a review of the Education System and to design a strategic plan to cover the following five years. With the help of a local education leader, the work was completed in the available three months. In each of the following four years, I returned to Tonga to observe the progress of the plan.

During the initial review process and during later follow-up visits, it became clear that there were identifiable cultural forces which both promoted and impeded the changes suggested in the review and the plan. This thesis is a study of those forces. The following section is background information about the Kingdom of Tonga, based on:

- my own observations,
- input from my Tongan hosts,
- available academic sources such as those by Campbell (2001, 2003, 2011), Evans (2001), Thaman (2009), Ernst (2006) and Fua (2006);
- more descriptive sources such as those by Moala (2009, 2011), Kaeppler (1998), Wood-Ellem (1999) and McCoy and Havea (2006),
- along with publications from the Tongan Research Association, the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the government's Ministry for Education, Women and Culture.

This information about the context for my thesis begins with the geography and recent history of Tonga. Then there is a brief consideration of various facets of Tongan society and, finally, information about the kingdom's religion, education and, in particular, the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System.

Geography

Tonga is a tiny Polynesian kingdom located in the South Pacific Ocean to the north-east of New Zealand and in the same latitudes as central Queensland.

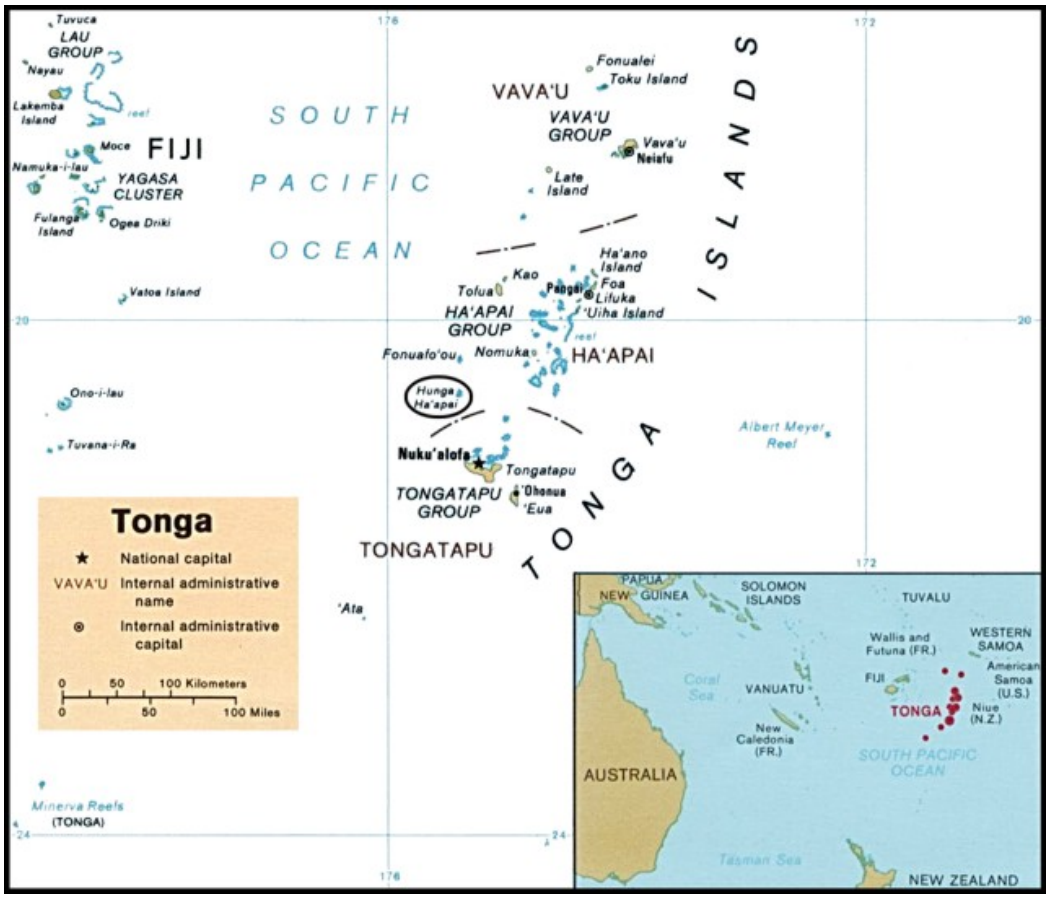


Figure 8 Maps of The Kingdom of Tonga and its location in the Pacific Ocean

The country covers a total area of over 700,000 square kilometres, of which only 748 square kilometres (0.1%) is land. There are 176 islands (give or take a few, depending on sea levels and volcanic eruptions – see Figure 4) and 36 of them are inhabited.

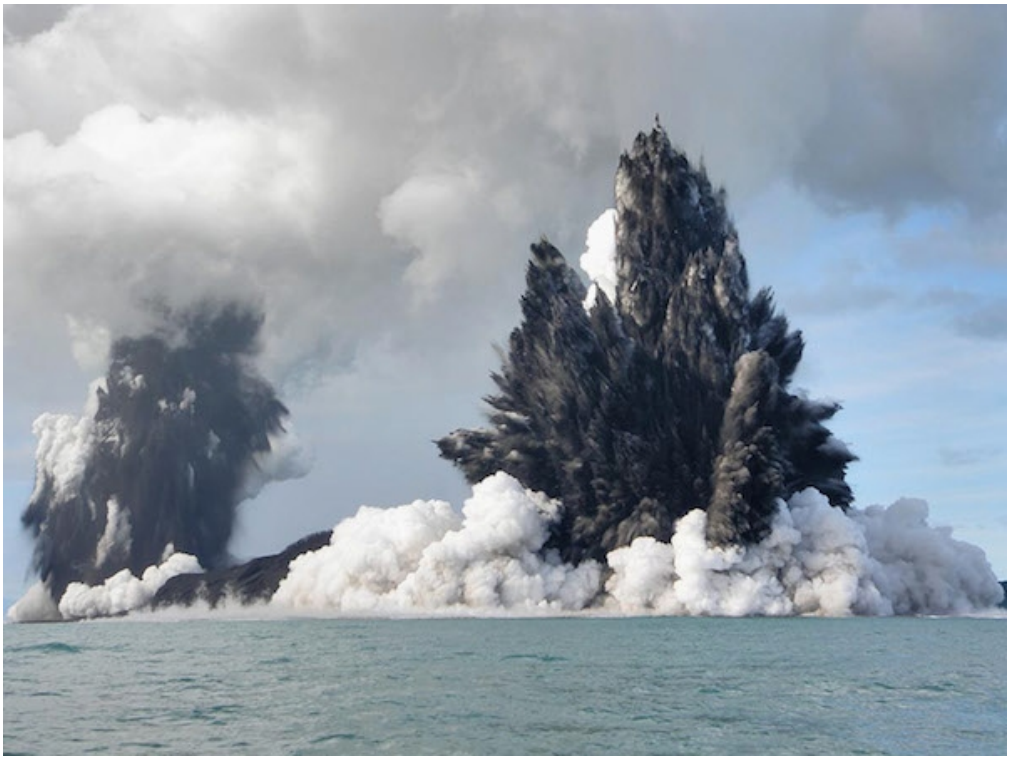


Figure 5 The emergence of a volcanic island from the sea near Tofua in 2009

From the country's northernmost point to the southernmost point is 800 kilometres.

The central group of islands, the Ha'apai Group, is divided into two chains. The islands in the eastern chain in this group are just above sea level and are of coral limestone formation; those in the western chain are well above sea level and are of volcanic origin. The country's largest island, Tongatapu, is of the coral variety and the other main island in the south, Eua, is of volcanic origins. The northern Vava'u Group is a mixture of the two. The three remote islands in the far north, the Niuas Group (not shown on the map), are volcanic.

The highest point in the country, at 1030 metres, is the extinct volcano, Kao, an island to the west of the Ha'apai Group. Nearby is another volcano (still active), Tofua, renowned as the site of the famous mutiny on the *Bounty*. To the east of Eua is the Tongan Trench, at 11000 metres below sea level, the second deepest place on Earth.

The climate is tropical with a distinct warm period (December-April) and a cooler period (May-November). Mean temperatures range from 23ºC in the south of the country to 27ºC in the north. Rain falls throughout the year, the wettest months being February to April. The annual rainfall for Nuku'alofa, the national capital in the south, is 1610 mm and in the north (Vava'u) 2175 mm. The tropical cyclone season lasts from November to April.

Parts of Tonga depict the 'South Seas Paradise' of white sandy beaches, warm turquoise sea and gently waving palm trees.

Figure 10 A beach scene in Tonga.

The four largest islands in the country include two of each geographical type: Tongatapu and Lifuka are coral islands. Vava'u and Eua are volcanic. The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System (henceforth usually referred to as the "System") has schools on these four islands and on the smaller island of Nomuka.

History and Background as Context

Before there can be a significant understanding of the current culture of Tonga, some knowledge of the nation's history, especially that of the past two centuries, is essential. For instance, the influence of missionaries and the tensions between nobles and commoners are just two facets of Tonga's history which are germane to its present culture. So I have written about that aspect of Tonga at some length.

Tonga had a long tradition of being a united kingdom. As early as the tenth century AD the scattered islands of Tonga were brought under the rule of the Tu'i Tonga. Legend has it that the first Tu'i Tonga, 'Aho'eita, was the son of the sky god Tangaloa and a human mother, hence the justification of the Tu'i Tonga's absolute authority in both sacred and secular matters (Howe, 1984, p .177).

There is evidence of human occupation of Tonga for at least 3000 years and, despite their seeming isolation, Tongans in past centuries had considerable contact with their island neighbours. Tonga lies at the southern apex of a triangle formed with its two important neighbours, Fiji and Samoa. These three groups of islands make up West Polynesia.

> Our common (Oceanic) history tells of seafaring ancestors who travelled the vast Pacific Ocean, conquering uncharted waters by 'feeling' the waves and reading the stars. For centuries they have survived on tiny atolls and islands … and have forged highly civilised cultures with their own unique languages, beliefs, knowledge, skills and ways of being. Central to this cultural process were bodies of knowledge that were formulated, tested, refined and applied to solve everyday problems. Such knowledge was often guarded by specialists and through legends and folklore were recorded and passed on to generations (Fua, 2006, p. 1).

Ocean voyages among the groups of islands developed into a trade network which included the importation of 'chiefly spouses' and certain other prestige items. During the 15th

to 17th centuries, Tonga became dominant in the region and formed the Tongan Empire. Many of the islands' interactions were more to do with war than with trade.

Early European explorers who visited Tonga included Dutchmen Willem Schouten (1616) and Abel Tasman (1643), Englishmen Samuel Wallis (1767) and James Cook (1773, 1774, 1777), Spaniard Francisco Mourelle (1781) and Frenchman J.F.G. de la Perouse (1787). These visits, mainly short, did not foreshadow imperialism – just exploration and searches for geographical and ethnographical knowledge. Capitan James Cook's first visit in 1773 (and his second and third visits) gave him and his colleagues opportunities to gather information and artefacts. Cook described Tongans as welcoming and generous and was the first to apply the epithet 'The Friendly Islands' to the country; he was unaware of an aborted plan to kill him! (Campbell, 2003. Chapter 3).

Trade opportunities between Tonga and Europe were slow to develop because of the islands' isolation from European markets. Interactions with foreigners became more common from early in the nineteenth century with the coming to Tonga of the Wesleyan missionaries - people who, in due course, were to play an important role in the evolution of Tongan culture.

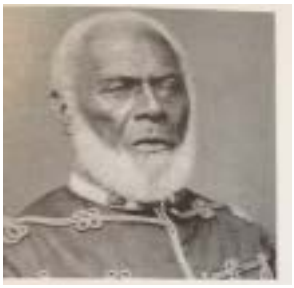


Figure 11 King George Tupou I

In the early decades of the century, a remarkable chief named Taufa'ahau emerged as a powerful warrior and was able to unify, to some extent, other tribes and chiefs. In 1831, thanks partly to the influence of an extraordinary Wesleyan missionary named John Thomas, he also became a Christian. These two events (the unification and the conversion) were

critical in Tonga's history and were followed by his assumption of the title, in 1845, of King George Tupou I (Taufa'ahau and his wife took the names George and Charlotte {Salote} out of respect for the British monarchs with these names). He brought relative stability and unity to the country and had the advantage of a long reign. He introduced codes of law (in 1839, 1850, 1862 and 1875) which helped him and his successors maintain that stability and unity. As part of his efforts, George Tupou I gave the chiefs certain powers and made them hereditary nobles, an act which was, no doubt, a wise move at the time but which created tensions which probably contributed to an explosive situation a century and a half later. "Even the most enduring (political structure) is being challenged, demanding reform so that a new basis of political leadership appointment is being sought other than the traditional basis of royal appointments and elite inheritance" (Moala, 2009, p. 117).

In 1890, under the *Treaty of Berlin*, Great Britain established a protectorate over Tonga and helped improve the kingdom's finances. This arrangement lasted until 1970.

Two significant Wesleyan missionaries in the second half of the century were Shirley Baker (who arrived in 1860) and James Moulton (1865). Their rivalry over twenty years resulted in divisions within the Christian community even as the country became increasingly Christian. Baker became very influential with King George, advised him on constitutional matters and became the country's first prime minister. Moulton's most significant legacy was in education, particularly the establishment of Tupou College, Toloa, a FWCT secondary school for boys

Figure 12 King George Tupou II

George Tupou I was succeeded by his great-grandson, George Tupou II, in 1893. Tupou II's reign lasted 25 years and he died still only in middle- age. That he survived so long against the opposition of nobles and déclassé chiefs is perhaps an endorsement of the soundness of the 1875 constitution, for he was young and inexperienced when he came to the throne, and showed no immediate getting of wisdom (Campbell, 2011, p. 11).

Along with his contributions to traditional Tongan arts, Tupou II's greatest achievement was to maintain Tonga's level of independence and autonomy, even while Britain handled its foreign affairs and protected it from external attack. It remains a matter of pride to Tongans that their country is the only one in the Pacific that was never formally colonised.

Figure 13 Queen Salote Tupou III

King George Tupou II was succeeded by his daughter, Queen Salote Tupou III, in 1918. She is described as an impressive individual who was a popular and successful

monarch. Latukefu (1974), somewhat extravagantly perhaps, wrote of “the Queen’s commanding presence and radiant and attractive personality” (p. 79).

Apart from Salote’s attempt to reconcile the Free Church of Tonga (of which her husband was a member) and the Free Wesleyan Church (of which she was titular head), she was not interested in inter-church squabbles. She was, however, particularly interested and influential in education and health provisions for her subjects. During her long reign, large strides were taken in those two areas. A lasting benefit from her reign was the provision of drinkable water to many of her subjects; this had a huge effect in reducing infant mortality rates and enhancing people’s general life expectancy. She also made the rest of the world aware of Tonga and, indeed, the Pacific area, especially during Queen Elizabeth’s coronation.

Vignette 1 Queen Salote in London

Queen Salote came to global attention in 1953 during the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London. She was travelling in an open carriage in the procession of dignitaries when heavy rain started falling. Unlike the dignitaries in other carriages, she refused to have the roof of the carriage closed, claiming that, in her culture, it was disrespectful to cover one’s head in the presence of a more senior person. This act won her the great approval of the British people and positive notice around the world. The opinion of the diminutive Asian gentleman with whom she shared the carriage is not so well known.

Figure 14 "Before the deluge"

Salote was able to articulate Tongan culture in a way few other Tongan leaders have been able to do. She participated in the arts aspect of culture but she did much more than that; she explained the significance of genealogy for her people and identified Tonga's 'four core values' – *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *mamahi'ime'a* (loyalty), *tauhivaha'a* (maintaining relationships) and *lototo* (sometimes translated as 'humility'). These four values firmly underpin the hierarchical nature of Tongan society. Salote's view of leadership was aristocratic, in line with that of Tupou I who created the system of powerful hereditary nobles.

Taufa'ahau Tupou IV succeeded his mother (Salote) in 1965 and his view of leadership was different; it was more technocratic. The ministers he appointed were generally men of technical competence, which was fine during times of stability. During difficult times in his mid-reign, however, leadership qualities such as integrity, loyalty to principles and the ability to enlist loyalty and deflect criticism were reported to be too frequently missing, thus exposing his technocratic leadership style to some ridicule. Some parliamentarians were sued by private citizens (Campbell, 2001, p. 236). In the later part of his reign, the appointments were attempts to combine the technocratic with aristocratic principles – the new ministers

were often both highly qualified and high-ranking. This did not completely satisfy the growing number of dissidents who wanted a more democratic system of government; conservatives pointed to the failed efforts of democratic governments around the Pacific (Campbell, 2001, p. 262).

Figure 15 King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

Soon after his accession to the throne, Tupou IV brought about some significant changes, especially in the international scene. This king's achievements include the re-establishment of full sovereignty in Tonga on June 4th, 1970, and admission to the Commonwealth of Nations shortly after. In 1976, realising that his nation was being largely ignored by the Western powers, the king established relations with the Soviet Union. As a result, New Zealand, USA and Australia began taking more notice of this 'awakening' kingdom in the South Pacific. His reign also emphasised economic development; he established a new export market in Japan, mainly for Tongan food products. The first shipment of pumpkins to Japan took place in 1989, a significant development.

By the early 1990s, corruption at high levels (Moala, 2007, p. 237) and increasing foreign influence led to a degree of dissatisfaction with traditional ways, at least in the government. "If he (Tupou IV) had exercised more discipline over his ministers, investigated charges of mismanagement or shown more willingness to listen to his advisors … much (later) trouble would have been avoided" (Campbell 2011, p. 231).

The dissident Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDM) had some electoral success and pushed for changes in the system of royally-appointed ministers coming from the ranks of the nobles. Democrats were outnumbered in the parliament by nobles in hereditary positions and they, the democrats, were constantly harassed and imprisoned.

Patelesio Finau, a Tongan Catholic Bishop, had this to say in 1991:

> Our people are coming of age and they should be given power. Our system now with nine members of Parliament representing 100,000 people, and nine nobles representing 33 nobles, and twelve MPs appointed by the king is just ridiculous. One day, our grandchildren will laugh at how foolish we are. I mean, I laugh at us now. If our king and nobles were papalangis (white people), we would not let this happen; but we have been fooled by the fact that they are Tongans, our own people (Moala, 2009, p. 140).

Five years before the end of Tupou IV's reign, Campbell (2001) wrote:

> Tonga's leaders, however they might be chosen in the twenty-first century, will find themselves at the head of a community greatly different from that which Tupou IV inherited. During his reign, the age structure of the population changed; life expectancy increased; contact with foreigners became commonplace and almost universal; foreign ideas about politics, manners and economics became thoroughly familiar; foreign travel was widely experienced; and a very large proportion of the population moved entirely out of the subsistence economy. Extensive as these changes were, they are not yet complete: this is a transitional era in which the indigenous and the foreign are unequally and unevenly blended (Campbell, 2001, p. 263).

Figure 16 King George Tupou V

The Tongan public expected some changes when George Tupou V succeeded his father in 2006. They were to be disappointed and rioting broke out in Nuku'alofa on 'Black Thursday', 16th November, of that year. Pro-democracy activists burned and looted selected shops and government buildings and about 60% of the central city area was destroyed. There were some deaths. "The pro-democracy leaders actually believed that they could impose democratic reform by mob force. …. This was a case in which they seem to have believed that their hoped-for end justified the means" (Moala, 2009, pp. 36-37).

Two years later, it was announced that George Tupou V would relinquish much of his power to the prime minister. "It was this king who took the initiatives that broke the deadlock in 2004, refused to let the tragic events of 'Black Thursday' derail the reform process, brought the nobles to accept reform and bring the long confrontation to an end" (Campbell, 2011, p. 232).

In 2011, Tonga instituted political reforms which created a constitutional monarchy on the Westminster pattern. This means that legislative authority became vested in a popularly elected parliament, with a cabinet chosen from members of parliament by a prime minister elected by the parliament. The role of the king was to be above politics and limited in direct administration of the state.

When Tonga held its first-ever fully representative elections, in 2011, it was perhaps ironic that they resulted in the election of a *noble* (Lord Tu'ivakano) as Tonga's first democratically elected prime minister. He replaced a democrat (Dr 'Alifeleti Sevele). Since then, another leading democrat, 'Akilisi Pohiva, has gained and lost the top position.

Time will tell whether the electoral reforms will bring about any real change, particularly in government efficiency and accountability. In a radio interview, Campbell

claimed that “The first year was not promising” (Radio Australia Pacific Beat, March 14th 2012).

At the time of his death, in March 2012, King George Tupou V was credited, (among others, by Campbell, 2011, p. 232) with the democratisation of Tonga after 165 years of feudalism. It was also possible, however, that he just happened to be king at the time of the inevitable and unstoppable democratic reforms. The actions of his brother and successor, Tupou VI (a prime minister during the corruption-tainted reign of Tupou IV, his father) will reveal if the reforms are long-lasting or if the country will relapse into feudalism.

Figure 17 King Tupou VI

Tupou VI became King on the death of his brother in 2012. His coronation, three years later, included many British coronation traditions (such as a crown reminiscent of Saint Edward’s crown, white knee breeches, ermine robes, Handel’s ‘Zadok the Priest’) as well as traditional Tongan elements (such as a huge kava ceremony and sitting dances) and was observed on television screens around the world.

The Constitution and Electoral Commission (CEC), established by the Tongan government to help with the introduction of reforms drew attention in its final report to “ignorance, caution and conservatism” (2009, p. 12). The report stated:

> We acknowledge that it is not every Tongan who wants change. Many wish simply for a return to the security of the way of life of previous years. Many

> harbour a genuine apprehension that total devolution of power to an elected Assembly will not only fundamentally alter the manner in which the country is governed but will also remove the very foundation of the stability of former times; the continuity which arose from a government appointed by the King (2009, p. 20).

Government

Tongans take pride in being able to claim that they have the only remaining monarchy in the Pacific.

They also take pride in claiming that theirs is the only nation in the Pacific which was never colonised by the European imperialist powers. Strictly speaking, this claim is accurate but the real situation is a little more blurred than that. For example:

- For 70 years, Tonga was a protectorate of Great Britain and was dependent on Britain for a generally stable economy.
- Wesleyan and Catholic missionaries arrived early in the 19th century and made tremendous changes to the local culture.
- Throughout the 20th century, Tonga became dependent on aid from the United States of America, Canada and, to a greater extent, from Australia and New Zealand.
- Late in the century and into the 21st, two new donor countries have become significant – Japan and, above all, China. Not all the aid from China has been grants – much of it has been loans and Tonga is now heavily in debt with little chance of being able to repay.
- A more subtle form of cultural colonialism since the 1920s has been that introduced by the Mormon Church. The buildings (churches and schools) look impressive but bear little resemblance to Tongan structures, the plethora of basketball courts speaks of an American culture and the signs outside the Mormon buildings declaring “Only

English spoken here" (or similar) indicate an insistence on changing the culture of the kingdom.

Figure 18 Gateway to a Tongan Mormon School

So, it is a little disingenuous for Tongans to claim that they have never been colonised.

The country is ruled by a monarch whose powers, though considerable, were circumscribed to some extent by King Tupou I in his Vava'u Code (1839), his Law Code (1850), his Emancipation Edict of 1862 and the Constitution (1875).

The Constitution, following the British model, created a Privy Council, a Cabinet and a Legislative Assembly and the king was empowered to appoint Governors of outer island groups. The Legislative Assembly was made up of twenty nobles and an equal number of 'People's Representatives'. A Cabinet of four ministers was appointed by the king from outside parliamentary ranks; they became known as the 'King's Representatives'.

During subsequent decades, the number of parliamentarians varied but the monarch's appointees and the nobles always outnumbered other members.

As outlined in the History section above, during the late 1980s the people of Tonga became more aware of the process of politics and more open to suggestions of constitutional change, but there had been a measure of discontent in earlier decades. In fact, it was not until the latter part of Queen Salote Tupou III's reign that the country could really claim to have stability, peace and unity. She marginalized parliament by dealing directly with the people and distributing patronage in traditional ways and through the church.

Salote's son, Tupou IV, reigned during a time (1965-2006) when the accountability of ministers came under scrutiny because of scandals related to expense allowances, passport sales, land deals and financial management generally. Ordinary Tongans by now had plenty of contact with other systems of government and the unofficial press became more outspoken in its criticisms and traditional loyalties and behaviour patterns were breaking down. The election of 1990 was part of a development which has seen the gradual erosion of the powers of the nobility; a Tongan writer, Epeli Hau'ofa claimed that this process 'transformed (nobles) from knighthood to pawnhood' (Daly, 1999, p. 89).

In 1992 two pro-democracy members of parliament proposed a parliament of thirty members, all (including nobles) elected on a population distribution basis; the king would select ministers from the parliament but the parliament could dismiss them. Predictably, the proposal was defeated by the combined votes of nobles and king's representatives.

After change came in 2011, the parliament had nine nobles (elected by about thirty nobles), 17 people's representatives (elected by the populace of 100,000) and up to four ministers from outside parliament, chosen by the king. The Prime Minister and Speaker are

appointed by the king on the recommendation of the parliament. In mid-2012, there were twelve ministers, ten of them parliamentarians (Campbell, 2011, p. 233-4).

> For a long time Tongan politics had been a zero-sum game, in which any gain for the pro-democracy movement was necessarily a loss for the Government, and vice versa. But over the last seven or eight years, new ideas had been percolating through the system, and indeed there has been a degree of generational change (Hill, 2007, p. 225).

The Tongan Economy

Tonga's economy is characterised by a large non-monetary (i.e. money does not change hands) sector and a considerable dependence on remittances from Tongans living abroad. Faeamani (1995) found that remittances constitute more than half of all income in *villages* in Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u and that money was sent for *misonali* (annual donations to churches) and other donations to churches, food and housing and some for small business investment. A few years later, Brown (1998) noted that, contrary to general expectations, remittances were not declining over time and remained at about 20% of the whole country's gross national product.

The monetary sector is dominated by the royal family and nobles. Small business, especially retailing in Tongatapu, is increasingly dominated by Chinese immigrants.

Manufacturing is limited to handicrafts and some small-scale industries which contribute about 3% of the nation's GDP.

Rural Tongans depend on subsistence agriculture – root crops and fruits, pigs and poultry – as has been the case for centuries. More cattle are now being raised, thus lowering the need for meat imports since 2005. Goats and sheep are rare in Tonga.

The World Bank (www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/tonga) indicates that 16% of the population lives below the poverty line.

Samate (2009) observed that Tonga's "economy is built on very shaky and unsteady ground. Over-dependence on remittances, tourism and mono-crop exports (such as squash) is very risky. Why not develop and improve multi-cropped exports, the fishing industry and local light manufacturing industries?" (p. 53).

In brief, the country's economy is not a healthy one. It follows that the country's biggest church, the FWCT, is not in a sound financial position and that its Education System struggles financially. The country, the church and the education system all are dependent on funds from overseas.

Tongan Social Structure

When a *palangi* (white person) meets another palangi for the first time, the first question is often something like "What (work) do you do?" When a Tongan meets another Tongan for the first time, the initial question is more likely to be "Who was your grandfather?" or perhaps "What village do you come from?"

In other words, a palangi's identity is closely related to his/her achievements; a Tongan's identity is more closely related to his/her cultural background.

Tonga's culture is founded on the concept of rank and this quoin affects every aspect of a Tongan's life. Often, it is difficult for a palangi to understand. McCoy (a palangi) and Havea (a Tongan) claim that "Even when they intellectually grasp what rank means to Tongans, palangis still do not *feel* what it is to be a Tongan, and they probably never will" (McCoy & Havea, 2006, p. 9).

At first glance, it seems straightforward. There are three tiers or classes of absolute hierarchy: royalty (*tu'i*), nobles (*nopele* and *hou'eiki)* and commoners (*kakai*). But then, there is the relative hierarchy which describes the status of a person in relation to other members of

his/her kin group (*kainga*) –generally, men are ranked higher than women but, within a family, sisters can be ranked higher than brothers; relatives on the father's side are ranked higher than relatives on the mother's side; older people are ranked higher than younger people (McCoy & Havea, 2006, p. 10).

Niu (1988) said that "total and unquestioning obedience or *faka'apa'apa* (respect for higher rank) is the essence of this social order" (p. 308). The matter of rank is plain to see in all aspects of Tongan life, even to things such as the way in which seating is planned in church, as I observed (see Vignette 2).

Vignette 2 Seating Arrangements in Church

> In the FWCT's main church building, the Centenary Chapel in Nuku'alofa, the seating arrangements are quite instructive. The seats form a T-shape with the pulpit at the intersection.
>
> The royal pews are located to the left of the pulpit on a raised platform and the nobles' seats are next to them, only lower. To the other side of the pulpit are seats, slightly raised, for palangis and other 'important' people. The commoners sit in the low rows down the stem of the T.

There is a language (or, more accurately, a lexicon) of respect among the three tiers of society. It is a linguistic strategy to show respect or to give deference to speech-act participants by indicating their relative social status or rank. There are three levels of vocabulary, each one associated with a tier. So, if a lower-ranked speaker (say, a kakai) addresses a more highly-ranked person (a nopele, perhaps), the kakai uses the vocabulary of the nopele, thus showing respect to the higher-ranked listener (Hartnung, 2011, p. 173-177).

Tongans are compelled to show respect in various ways to more highly-ranked people from an early age. In the twenty first century, I have observed Tongan school students on their knees when approaching a teacher. Respect (faka'apa'apa) is one of the Queen Salote's Four Core Values but it could be perceived to be a one-way value.

So, school students are expected to show respect in a way which could be seen by a Westerner as demeaning but receive little respect themselves, as I observed during my fourth visit (see Vignette 3).

Vignette 3 Respect in the Car Park

King George Tupou V died while I was visiting Tonga. In the days preceding his funeral, the students of one of the Wesleyan high schools with which I was familiar were sent to pull weeds and cut grass (using a bush knife) in the area that was to become the car park for VIPs attending the funeral. They did this with something less than alacrity, spending a good deal of time sitting under the trees with an occasional desultory show of effort.

From my office window I had seen what was happening and asked the school's principal whether the students might have spent their time more constructively in their classrooms and that the wealthy royal family might have employed a few of the many unemployed men of the town to do the work. I was assured, quite firmly, that the children *wanted* to do the work out of respect for the dead king. It was not clear, however, that the students had actually been asked for their opinions.

"A Tongan's reaction to rank is not an intellectual one that can logically be set aside. Rather, it appears to be a physiological response based on the cultural imprint received in the process of growing up" (McCoy & Havea, 2006, p. 11).

To compound the matter even more, the importance and influence of ministers of religion and the rapid growth of bureaucracies and a business-related middle class during the reign of Tupou IV has resulted in a complex and (to a palangi) confusing social order and structure.

This structure is a factor, which, perhaps more than any other, affects the rate and nature of social (including educational) change. This suggestion will be explored later in this thesis.

The present population of Tonga is a little over 100,000 (i.e. the country's entire population could fit into the stands of the Melbourne Cricket Ground) and the density approaches 150 people per square kilometre of island land.

Although the country's number of births (1588 in 2015) is far greater than its number of deaths (308 in 2015), the population growth has been slow (95,000 in 1985; 105,000 in 2015 – a percentage increase of 11.5% in 30 years). To a great extent, this slow growth rate is the result of emigration; net migration in the year to mid-2015 was minus 1127 (www.countrymeters.info/en/Tonga). People, especially young people, have been moving from the outer islands to the main island (and capital) in recent decades; the population growth rate in Tongatapu is positive but in all other islands the rate is negative.

There are possibly more than 100,000 Tongans living outside their home country, mainly in New Zealand, Australia and the American states of California and Utah – the "Tongan Diaspora". Lee (2004, p. 240) suggested that the diaspora had resulted in 40,000 Tongans living in New Zealand, 37,000 in Australia and 15,000 in USA.

"Young Tongans, born and bred overseas, need to be exposed to Tongan culture early in life in order to minimize the negative effects of an 'identity crisis'. They may then take pride in their culture and may make the best choices offered by the two worlds they live in" (Samate, 2007, p. 54).

Although many Tongans are moving out of their homeland, increasingly Chinese are moving into Tonga.

Chinese Residents

According to the New Zealand Herald newspaper on 23rd November, 2001, at the beginning of the 21st century, there were about 4000 Chinese people resident in Tonga. That number has increased since then. Many of these residents operate small kiosks and some larger shops and are very visible in the markets, especially in Nuku'alofa. As a frequent visitor over five years in the kingdom, I observed that the work ethic of these Chinese immigrants appears to differ from that of the Tongans. For example, while the Tongans have their own kiosks and market stalls, they are likely to close early each day and not open for business if a special event is about to happen. The Chinese kiosks, on the other hand, generally remain open beyond midnight. Chinese tradesmen have a reputation for usually arriving at work early and then to work efficiently all day. In contrast, the Tongan tradesmen have a reputation for being late or absent altogether and, at times, lack the necessary skills. As a result, the Chinese community is perceived as prospering while the Tongan community suffers economically.

Not surprisingly perhaps, this perception has bred antagonism and played a significant part in the 'Black Thursday' riots in 2006. A large number of the business premises burned down on that occasion were occupied by Chinese residents and businesses (Moala, 2009, p. 37). If this disaster were meant to 'scare off' the Chinese, it did not achieve that end. Unfortunately for the Tongan rioters, the burnings had the opposite effect. Almost immediately, new, bigger establishments were constructed (by immigrant Chinese tradesmen) for use by Chinese business people (see Vignette 4).

The Chinese community has limited social, employment or educational contacts with Tongans. The two cultures co-exist in physical space but demonstrate little sharing of social,

educational or cultural space. For example, almost no Chinese students can be observed attending FWCT schools.

Vignette 4 Resort Construction

> I visited the site of a small family-owned resort under construction on the coast of Tongatapu. The owners were palangis and, in an effort to support the local economy, they wanted to employ local men to work on the building, the completion date for which was predetermined. Unfortunately, they found that the Tongan workers were invariably late for work, often did not appear at all and made little progress. The proposed completion date was approaching so, reluctantly, they ended the Tongans' employment and employed some Chinese workers. The new workers arrived on time every day, worked diligently and finished the project with time to spare.

Resentment continues and more trouble (such as that in 2006) is not impossible to imagine.

Language

Before the arrival of Europeans, Tongans had no written form of their own language, so the early missionaries devised one. Their creation is phonetic and uses only twelve consonants and five vowels, each of which represents only one sound. This makes it easy for a non-Tongan speaker to read aloud the language accurately, even without comprehension of what is said.

It is not difficult to 'read' Tongan words so, during a church service, for example, it is possible for a non-Tongan speaker to join in readings and hymn singing. The words of the first three verses of a well-known psalm appear in the following vignette (5).

Vignette 5 The Twenty Third Psalm

Tongan SAME 23

1. Ko hoku tauhi ‘a Sihova: ‘E ‘ikai te u masiva.

2. ‘Oku ne fakatokoto au he ngaahi toafa lau mukomuku: ‘oku ne taki au ki ngaahi vai fakanonga.

3. Ko hoku laumalie ‘oku ne fakifoki: ‘Oku ne taki au ‘I he ngaahi hala ‘o e ma’oni’oni; Ko hono ‘uhinga e Ke hono haufa pe.

English PSALM 23

1. The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.

2. He makes me lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside still waters.

3. He restores my soul: he leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

There are circumstances in which English and Tongan languages join, although it may not always be obvious. Tongan words consist of alternating consonants and vowels and always end with a vowel or vowels. So, English words for which there is no Tongan equivalent are adapted into Tongan through a process of ‘Tonganisation’ . Thus: kaloti (carrot), positi ‘ofisi (post office), nopele (noble), Mele (Mary), Monite (Monday), tekesi (taxi).

At least one Tongan word has now become a commonly used word in the English language – ‘tapu’ (taboo).

Tongan Sport and the Arts

By far, the most popular sport in Tonga is rugby. It is played at every level in schools, villages have their teams and the national team, the *Ikale Tahi* (Sea Eagles), is held in great esteem throughout the rugby world. One of the country's principal exports (to Australia, New Zealand, Japan and even Wales) is professional rugby players.

Figure 19 An international rugby match (Tonga = red and white).

A visitor to Tonga is soon likely to gather a few 'rugby stories'. Here are some of mine (Vignette 6).

Vignette 6 Rugby Stories

During the 2011 Rugby World Cup, Tonga surprised many people by defeating France (an eventual finalist) in one game. This win resulted in a memorable flurry of excitement, noise and red-and-white displays which stopped traffic and made entering Nuku'alofa by road quite impossible.

During that visit, a principals' retreat had been organised but one evening session had to be cancelled because all the principals departed to watch a rugby game on a large community television screen.

At Tongatapu secondary school rugby level, traditional rivals have been a Wesleyan college and a government college. In many years, the inter-college final has been played by these two school teams. The rivalry has become violent in recent years, including off the pitch, and the government has now forbidden its school from participating in the competition. The Wesleyan leaders have also been very concerned about on-going non-rugby rivalry, especially during 2012-13.

I visited the schools on an outer island in 2010 and found that the FWCT high school was to be closed for the afternoon. This was to allow all the staff and students to go to support the school's rugby team in a match against the local government school on a pitch next door to the Wesleyan school. Apart from the Wesleyan team members and coach, only four of the school's staff and twenty or so of its students actually attended. Everybody else just went home.

Other sports, such as netball, basketball, athletics and tennis are also played. It is a little surprising perhaps that, in a country of islands, swimming does not figure prominently as a sport in Tonga. Of course, the lack of swimming pools in the country does not allow for serious pursuit of the sport.

As well as rugby, the sports at which the Tongans excel at international level are those requiring strength (such as boxing and weightlifting) rather than speed or agility.

The arts and crafts of Tonga include visual arts such as carving, tapa cloth making, basket-making and weaving but there is only a limited tradition of painting. Exhibitions of visual artworks have been uncommon in the past but in recent years some have been held. In 2009, I attended the first public art exhibition in the memories of the people to whom I spoke (including artists). Much of the craft work is for tourist consumption. The following photograph (Figure 16) shows an autobiographical work of art, done in natural materials, in my possession.

Figure 20 A work of art

Performance arts include traditional dance and choral singing. Choral and band competitions are the norm in schools and secondary schools invariably have a bandmaster on staff. Brass bands (school, village, military, police, and church) are numerous and most play with considerable skill. Ukeleles, guitars and electronic keyboards are also popular instruments. Traditional dancing is a significant aspect of the Tongan studies school curriculum and is included in all school and community events such as speech nights, school

fairs, birthday celebrations, weddings, graduation days and fund-raisers. I attended many such events. Dancing also figures prominently in tourist entertainment (Figure 17), such as that at Hina Cave.

Figure 21 Tongan girls dancing at a celebration

Health in Tonga

Some significant health data about Tongans is listed. This information is from www.commonwealthhealth.org/pacific/tonga :

1. Child and maternal health – infant mortality 13/1000 live births (2011); consistent decline in infant mortality (down from 25/1000 in 1990) but not yet down to the Millennium Development Goal 4 (i.e.

8/1000) by 2015; from 2007 to 2012, 98% of births were attended by qualified health professionals.

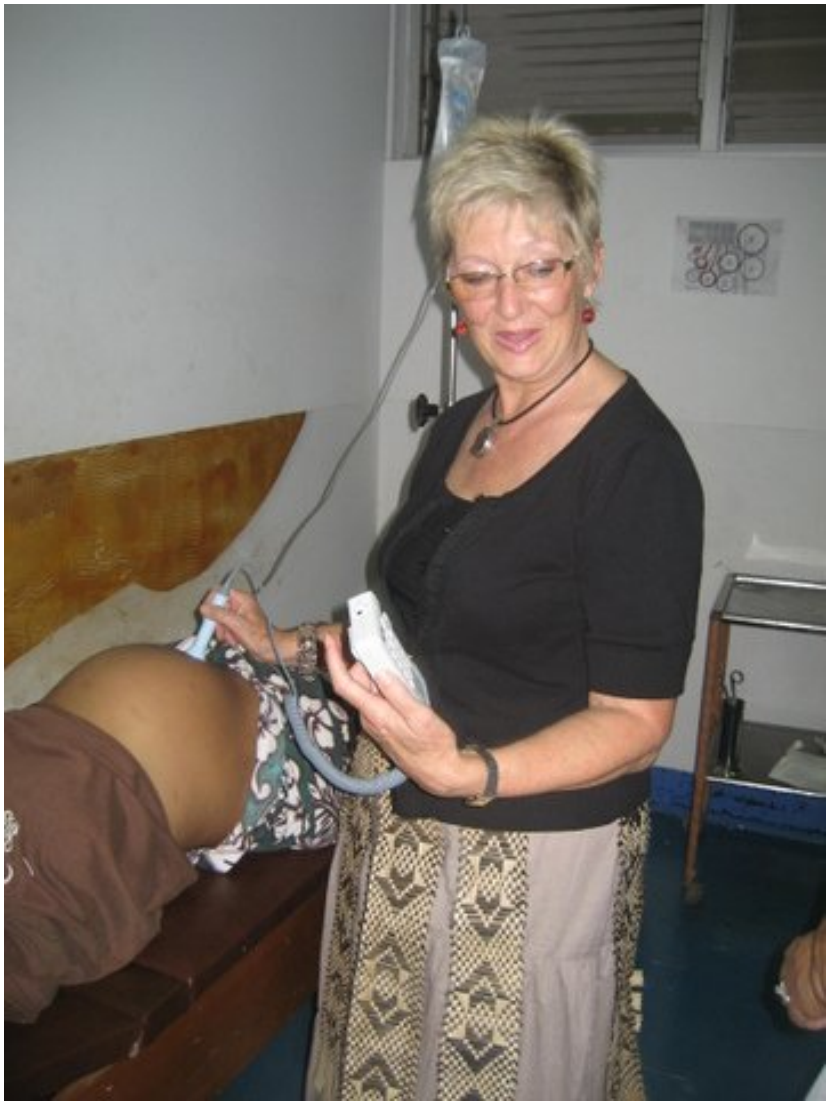


Figure 22 A UnitingWorld volunteer donates a foetal monitor to a Tongan hospital

2. Life expectancy – 68 years in 1980 and 72 years in 2011.

3. Measles immunisation – 99%; Millennium Development Goal achieved.

4. Health system – public spending on health is 5% of GDP (2010); Ministry of Health provides free healthcare and medication; 14 healthcare centres (one per 7200 people) and four hospitals.

5. Water and sanitation – 100% of the population has access to 'improved drinking water sources; 96% have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2010)

6. Medical professionals – doctors 56/100,000 residents; nurses and midwives 388/100,000; pharmaceutical personnel 15/100,000.

7. Mortality by cause – 22% communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional causes; 4% injuries; 43% cardiovascular diseases and diabetes; 9% cancers; 7% respiratory diseases; 15% other non-communicable diseases.

The issue of diet and its effect on health is mentioned later in this thesis but, at this stage, it is sufficient to indicate that the high levels of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes are connected to obesity, a major health issue in Tonga and related to the poor diet of many residents.

Parsons (1985) defined the Tongan concept of the healthy life as the maintenance of harmony in relationships and describes the differences between what are seen as Western illnesses and Tongan illnesses in which supernatural spirit influences are at work. Christianity and concepts of evil spirits co-exist. Both the causes of and the remedies for illness are seen as complementary, more than exclusively the domain of only one system of belief and knowledge. Treating Tongans, she concluded, was "not simply a matter of providing medicine or surgery but involves dealing with an extensive range of meanings reflecting a fundamentally different worldview" (p. 107).

After three decades of increasing Western contacts, Parsons' words are probably still relevant.

Tongan Law and Order

A significant aspect of the administration of the law in Tonga is the fact that Chief Justices are appointed from overseas, usually New Zealand (Campbell, 2011, p. 235). Given the small size of the nation's population, this is not surprising. Even if indigenous lawyers of suitable expertise were available, the potential for perceived conflict of interest would be considerable.

Winslow (2014) described a few aspects of the law scene in Tonga:

- The Minister for Police and Prisons leads a police force of 400 officers, among whom there are reports of bribe-taking and other corruption.
- The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary and the highest ranking judges traditionally are foreign nationals.
- Prison conditions are 'Spartan' but reflect local living standards.
- Inheritance laws discriminate against women.
- Rape is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment but there is no law against spousal rape.
- Drug trafficking deterrents are hampered by outdated laws and inexperienced/undertrained police officers.
- Crime rates in Tonga are low compared with industrialised countries for offences such as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and motor vehicle theft.
- Tonga has 690 such offences per 100,000 people
  Japan has 1529 per 100,000 and
  USA has 4184 per 100,000.

Moala (2009) quoted a Tongan prison officer: "Some of the kids who are brought in for detention come from families where the parents are good church people,

but the problem here is that parents seem to be so taken up with church activities while the kids are grossly neglected" (p.12).

So, to religion, one of the most obvious aspects of the Tongan way of life.

Religion in Tonga

"Trying to understand Tonga without grasping the absolute centrality of Christian belief and worship is like trying to swim without getting wet" (Hill, 2007, p. 233).

Before the coming to Tonga of the Christian missionaries at the end of the 18th century, the Tongan people had a form of pagan worship which included the belief that only 'chiefly people' had souls. "Christianity freed Tonga from the taboos and restrictions that the high priests of the old religion had imposed upon their society, and for the first time, it gave commoners a place in life after death" (McCoy & Havea, 2006, p. 29).

Christianity was introduced to Tonga in 1797 when ten missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived in Tongatapu; shortly after their arrival half of the missionaries had died of various causes and the remainder soon departed.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society (formed in London in 1817) did not replace the LMS missionaries immediately but, in 1826, they sent the energetic and effective John Thomas to Tonga and, during his quarter of a century in the country, made many converts, including the warrior who was to become King George Tupou I.

More Wesleyan missionaries (by this time, usually referred to as 'Methodists') arrived in 1882 and were even more successful than Thomas and his colleagues. They converted the majority of Tongans to Christianity.

The conversion of Tongans to Christianity had several likely causes. To begin with, when a chief converted, his people had little option but to follow; thus many conversions were insincere or short-lived. Another major reason was the association of Christianity (the Europeans' religion) with the attractions of technology, prosperity and literacy (Campbell, 2003).

In mid-19th century, Catholic priests arrived but their presence was perceived to be a threat to stability in the new nation, including the possibility of foreign (i.e. French) political intervention. Tupou I restricted their influence but, in subsequent decades, Catholicism won converts around the country.

A disagreement among Methodist leaders in 1924 led to the formation of three separate Methodist congregations – The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, The Free Church of Tonga and the Church of Tonga. All three remain strong nearly a century later.

The first Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) mission in the 1920s reinforced social order and respect for the family and supported social groups such as boy scouts and girl guides. Today, the Mormons appear to be numerically strong and growing but it is an oft-repeated comment in Tonga that, when children approach school age (and Mormon schools are much better built, equipped, staffed and funded than any other schools in the kingdom – with finance from Utah), their parents have a conversion to Mormonism.

Other religions and Christian denominations are represented in small numbers see Table 1.

Table 1
Church Affiliations in Tonga

The ‘others’, noted in the figure above, are the newer, evangelical, fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches which include Tonga Bible Baptist Church, Christadelphians Worldwide, Church on the Rock, New Apostolic Church, New Life Church, Tonga Fellowship for Revival and the United Pentecostal Church International. Their impact, however, appears to be small.

“The proliferation of churches of different denominations is very apparent: even a small village may contain two or three. But they all work together when necessary, for instance if labour is required for a new building” (Daly, 1999, p. 24).

Today, the Catholic Church in Tonga prioritises efforts to reduce social problems more than other denominations do and the Catholic Church has established departments and programs to assist in the various areas of economic and social need. It contributes greatly in health and education – three health clinics, four education colleges and three post-secondary school institutes.

The Wesleyans' main social thrust remains in education, as it has for nearly two centuries. Only recently (2010), has a 'crisis ministry' been established; its role is the support of various marginalised groups in Tongan society, including prostitutes and deportees.

There is no official 'state church' in Tonga. Even so the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga church has considerable influence as shown by the following.

- Wesleyan clergy are usually prominent at royal events such as funerals and coronations.
- Coronations are conducted in the FWCT's main church building, the Centennial Chapel in Nuku'alofa.
- Many members of the Royal Family attend/have attended FWCT schools;
- The Royal Chaplain is the President of the FWCT.
- The monarch opens the Wesleyans' annual church conference.
- The Royal Family regularly attend worship in the main Wesleyan church in Nuku'alofa.

The FWCT tends to be conservative and pro-status quo in political matters despite its involvement in the Tongan National Council of Churches (TNCC).

Along with the Tongan Church Leaders' Forum, the TNCC leads the ecumenism scene in Tonga. The council was established in 1973 by the FWCT, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church; since then, some of the other mainline churches have joined, sometimes with observer status. The TNCC is at times vocal in raising social justice and peace concerns and has openly supported the Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement. These 'political' matters are generally ignored by the less traditional (newer, evangelical, fundamentalist and Pentecostal) churches,

which, being even more conservative than the mainline churches, prefer to leave them to the government.

King George Tupou I put his imprimatur on the significance of religion in Tonga with his 1850 Law Code:

> My mind is this. That all my people should attend to all the duties of religion towards God; that they should keep holy the Sabbath Day, by abstaining from their worldly occupations and labours, and by attending to the preaching of the word and the worship of God in their places of worship (Latukefu, 1974, pp. 222-223).

By the time the king signed the nation's constitution in 1875, he had refined his views even further:

> 5. All men (sic) are free to perform their worship and to worship God as they may deem fit in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences and to assemble to perform their worship in such places as they may appoint to do so. 6. The Sabbath Day shall be sacred in Tonga for ever and it shall not be lawful to work, or artifice, or play games, or trade on the Sabbath. And any agreement made or document witnessed on this day shall be counted void, and will not be protected by the Government (Latukefu 1974, p. 253).

My observations were that Sundays in Tonga, including the capital, Nuku'alofa, are very quiet; the streets are almost empty of cars and pedestrians. A large proportion of Tongans attend church services (where the music, both the *a capella* singing and the ubiquitous brass bands, is memorable and of a high standard and the prayers and sermons vigorous … and long); then it is time for the big family meal of the week (an *umu*, prepared the previous day and cooked that morning). The afternoon typically is spent with Bible study, Sunday School or just sleeping off the meal. The evening provides another opportunity for church attendance. Tourists and the less devout

Tongans in Tongatapu are likely to spend the day at a nearby island, Pangimotou, where the strict code of behaviour is relaxed.

This strong commitment of adherence to churches and religious observance is a basic aspect of Tongan culture and is reflected in common behaviour. The following are some examples.

- It is the practice for many, perhaps most, Tongans to attend church services at least once each week.
- Almost no respondents indicate ‘no religion’ on census papers.
- Members and adherents are expected to make significant financial and other contributions to their various churches.
- Children of Wesleyan families are expected to attend Wesleyan schools and the same applies to other denominations and religions.
- The wearing of ‘respectful’ clothes is the practice, especially in the villages, and swimming is done fully clothed.
- Prayers are not uncommon in restaurants before traditional feasts are eaten – an attending faifekau (ordained minister) will be invited to lead the prayer or, if no faifekau is present, the owner of the restaurant is likely to officiate.

There are 310 faifekau in the FWCT (only nine of them in Tonga being women, none of whom has her own parish), to serve a membership of about 37,000 and there is no shortage of prospective faifekau; in 2012, for example, there were twenty new faifekau ordained at the church’s annual conference. Among other things, this is a reflection of the high status enjoyed by the clergy in Tonga.

The depth of faith (and fatalism, perhaps) among Tongan people was demonstrated after a ferry disaster in 2009 (Figure 19 and Vignette 7).

Figure 23 Medical Staff Meeting Tragedy Survivors

Vignette 7 A Tragedy

At the time of the disaster, my wife, Ms Margaret Tabor, and I were on the island of Lifuka, in the Ha'apai Group. An inter-island ferry, the *Princess Ashika*, sank during a severe overnight storm while sailing between Nuku'alofa and Lifuka.

The following morning Ms Tabor, who was a nurse and midwife, learned that survivors were soon to arrive at the island on another ferry. She volunteered to join the local medical team to give whatever assistance could be given to the hundred or so survivors. When the second ferry arrived, it was apparent that all the survivors were men. All 74 women and children on board the *Princess Ashika* had perished. That happened because the women and children were **inside** the crowded boat and the men were on the deck when she foundered. Those inside the vessel were unable to escape. When they came ashore, the survivors required little medical aid. What they did need was a great deal of emotional and spiritual support.

The local Catholic priest gathered everyone in a hall and led a service of prayer and hymn-singing.

To a palangi, the reaction to the tragedy was remarkable. There was very little "God-blaming" or even (at first, anyway) blaming the owners of the ferry for their negligence. Much more prevalent, both immediately after the event and during the months following, was an acknowledgment of it being "what God wills".

Education in Tonga

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, not surprisingly, traditional education in Tonga was sufficient and appropriate but, from early in the seventeenth century, the country was drawn inexorably into change.

In pre-Christian days, education was concerned with nature, traditions and customs and aimed to produce physically healthy males and females who could pass on traditional values and customs.

"Education (as worthwhile learning) was always about partnerships; among extended families; between families and communities and between one community and another. Underlying these partnerships were shared values derived from teachers' and learners' cultures" (Thaman in Townsend and Bates, 2007, p. 54).

Formal education brought by missionaries focused on universal laws and truth, Christian ethics and the outside world. It helped to produce people who started to think more for themselves and were more aware of their dignity and identity. Christian practices at schools meant that children were slightly less likely to be subjected to the traditional strict socialising effects of their families.

Unfortunately, according to Nabobo-Baba (2012):

> the education delivered through schools was culturally undemocratic: that is, they did not take into consideration the way most Pacific people think, learn and communicate with one another. This relates to the values that underpin the curriculum, the teaching methods most teachers use, and the way in which student learning is assessed and evaluated (p. 88).

The later decades of the nineteenth century saw changes in Tongan education. As well as learning to read (especially the Bible) and write, students were now delving

into pure science courses (like physics and chemistry) as well as mathematics (including algebra and trigonometry). The government gave full support to the churches in their education endeavours during this period and progress was considerable.

Formality and administration by rules were firmly established with schools becoming effectively and efficiently administered and incorporating such democratic approaches as staff meetings and delegation of responsibilities. Teaching gradually became a profession and the people's support for education became stronger and stronger (Paongo, 1996, p. 139).

This 'Golden Age' of Tongan education was followed by conflict and a decline in the standard of education, as reported to me by present-day education leaders. The social changes brought by Christianity and education weakened the traditional sanctions which guided people's behaviour, resulting in more social problems. The power and status structure in society was changing – the chiefs' authority was undermined. By the mid-1920s, the country was ready for the suggestion that there should be an independent Tongan church and a national system of education but the missionaries were slow to recognise this. Tongan culture was being pushed to the limits of forbearance and, perhaps inevitably, a period of stagnation in education followed in the first half of the twentieth century. Expatriate educators left during this period and the local teachers received their, often inadequate, training 'on the job'. Still, they managed to keep church-based schooling functioning during this period when a push for the teaching of 'practical' subjects became strong.

By 1945, the offices of Minister and Director of Education had been established to lead and administer the kingdom's education system.

The System's current education officers explained to me that the second half of the 20th century saw something of a rebirth in Tongan education. Some of the changes witnessed are reported below.

- An increased awareness among parents of the importance of education for the welfare of the people.
- A re-examination of education priorities by both the government and the churches.
- An expansion of provisions to accommodate increased school enrolments.
- An introduction of tertiary provisions, including programs with the University of the South Pacific.
- The establishment of new academic high schools for more able students.
- The continued valuing of practical subjects in the curriculum
- The training of local teachers (to replace palangis) and the development of their pedagogical skills.

During this period, the government greatly increased its provision of primary education and slightly increased its involvement in secondary education. A change of great significance was the emerging perception of Tonga High School (a co-educational government school in Nuku'alofa) as the best place for the education of able students who were keen to obtain a white-collar position, especially in government service. Several FWCT Education System leaders told me that parents who were ambitious for their children chose to send them to Tonga High School.

A reading of the 2008 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture (MEWAC) is instructive: it indicates that the Ministry's first function is "To ensure (that) the country is provided with skilled and competent

manpower needed for sustainable development" (2008, p. 1). In other words, the school/work nexus is established clearly as the Ministry's main *raison d'etre*; the government high school leads to 'better' jobs.

Unfortunately, not all parental middle class ambitions were realistic but the effect on enrolments in non-government schools was considerable. Many of the more able students were 'creamed off', leaving the church schools with a relatively high proportion of less able students; this, in turn, adversely affected the examination results in church schools, making them less attractive to parents, realistic or otherwise. This situation was mentioned to me by several System principals on a number of occasions.

An obvious response for the church schools would have been to increase the number and range of practical subjects they offered. Unfortunately, parents (possibly aware of the MEWAC nexus) were usually keener on academic courses for their children, believing that white collar work was preferable to manual work. Another difficult issue was the high cost of setting up and running practical courses which needed expensive equipment and small classes. In the cash-strapped church schools, practical courses were slow to develop.

By the end of the 20th century, the biggest provider of primary education in Tonga was the government's MEWAC (Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture) and the various church system schools offered most of the secondary provision. The church schools were established early and most of them were secondary schools. Later, the government set out to provide a service where it was most obviously lacking – primary education – and this provision continues to grow. The differences in enrolment levels between government and church schools is considerable, as revealed

in Table 2 which indicates the level of student enrolments and teacher numbers throughout the country in 2007.

Table 2

Student Enrolments and Teacher Numbers, 2007

	MEWAC (Govt.)	FWCT	Other
	Primary schools		
Students	15390	710	792
Teachers	578	51	36
	Middle and Secondary schools		
Students	5238	3111	6236
Teachers	261	285	436
	Totals		
Students	20628	3821	7028
Teachers	839	336	472

2008 Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture Report

A seeming anomaly in Table 2 is the difference between the number of primary students (1502 for FWCT and others) and the number of secondary students (9347) in the non-government systems. This situation is historical; secondary education was much more prized by the early educators who, to a large extent, ignored primary education. In due course, the government system filled the gap.

Early childhood education (ECE) was a small and under-valued aspect of the education scene but, early in the new century, that was to change. By 2012, there were 74 government ECE centres throughout the country with 2201 pupils. Change in this area was also to come in the Wesleyan System.

Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System

'Western' education came to Tonga with the early Wesleyan (Methodist) missionaries during the 19th Century and, despite many years of hardship and set-backs, has provided generations of Tongans with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to lead, to serve and to live in Tonga and abroad.

According to the President of Education during an education leaders' retreat in 2009, there were eight phases in the development of the FWCT Education System to bring it to its present state and these are outlined below.

- From 1826 Primary/elementary schools were run by missionaries and were designed to enable people to read and write so that they could read the Bible.
- From 1866 Primary and secondary education, including Tupou College, Toloa (TCT), came into being.
- From 1921 Secondary schools continued to evolve with the establishment of Queen Salote College (QSC) as a separate girls' school and a national curriculum was adopted (leading to Public exams).
- From 1948 more primary schools and some middle schools were established and the National Higher Leaving Certificate was introduced in secondary schools; Sia'atoutai Theological College was established; Tupou College moved from Nafuala (near Nuku'alofa) to Toloa (its own somewhat isolated village in the countryside).
- From 1963 Primary, middle and secondary schools grew in strength and Tupou High School (THS) opened doors for higher education, especially through overseas curricula and examinations.

- From 1965 Primary schools started to decline but middle and secondary schools remained strong; Tupou College (TCT) and Queen Salote College (QSC) took students directly from primary schools; higher education now included Hango Agricultural College which joined Tupou High School (THS) in this area.
- From 1970 Because of financial and other problems (including competition), primary and middle schools declined; secondary schools extended upwards to Form 6 (Year 12 in Tasmania) and Tupou High School extended downwards to Form 1 (Year 7).
- From 1999 Primary and middle schools continued to decline, other secondary schools were established, Form 7 (Year 13) classes began at THS, TCT and QSC; New Zealand diploma courses were offered at the newly established Tupou Tertiary Institute.

According to the System's records, in 2009, there was a total of 4,914 students enrolled in eight primary schools (including two bilingual schools), three middle schools, eight secondary schools (one of them on three campuses), three tertiary colleges and 16 kindergartens. Four secondary schools were either fully- or partly-boarding schools. Staffing these 35 establishments were 393 teachers and 109 other staff (including office staff, farm staff and other 'outdoor' staff), a total of 502 people. Managing the system was a Head Office staff consisting of the President of Education, the Deputy President, eight education officers and several auxiliary staff.

Sia'atoutai Theological College appears to be a semi-autonomous establishment (i.e. it is formally part of the System but, in practice, acts as if it were separate) and its statistics are not included in the preceding paragraph.

Working conditions for the System's 500 or so employees (including nearly 400 teachers) are not good. The salary levels are very low, even allowing for recent increases. Many of them have other employment as well as their teaching work so that they have sufficient income to meet their needs. Most do not have easy access to a car and are dependent on public transport; this makes attendance at centrally located professional development activities difficult; even getting to school on time each morning is not always easy. Many System teachers have housing available to them and this can be an attraction. Figure 20 shows a house used by an FWCT teacher located in the grounds of the school where the teacher works.

Figure 24. A FWCT Teacher's House

Their commitment to their church is strong for many teachers. Even so, qualified, competent teachers are always liable to be tempted to leave the System for much better paid work in government (or Mormon) schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

PART A - THE REVIEW, THE PLAN AND THE IMPLEMENTATION

First Visit – Response to an Invitation

After a career as teacher and school principal in Tasmania for 32 years and as an education consultant in United Kingdom for 13 years, I retired in 2008. The following year, I volunteered, with UnitingWorld, an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), to work in education in Tonga. The UCA's partner church in Tonga is the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga (FWCT) and I was placed with the FWCT Education System, responsible to the System's President (Director) of Education, Rev 'Alifeleti 'Atiola.

The initial expectation was that I would help to develop the teaching skills of the System's teachers, especially those who were untrained. The President had learned of my past experience in education, however, and had other plans.

Upon arrival in Tonga for my first visit, I was asked by the President to:

- conduct a review of the System's structure and operations and write a report (description) of observations made; and
- Design a five-year strategic plan to help the System develop and reform.

A local, experienced Senior Education Officer, Rev Dr 'Asinate Samate, was to be my colleague. Dr Samate had just returned to Tonga after several years of study overseas. Previously, she had been a student, teacher and principal in the System and was familiar both with the System and the people involved in it.

The two of us charged with the two tasks became known as the Panel and that is how we will be referred to throughout this paper.

It was clear that when Rev ‘Atiola spoke of “a plan to develop the System” he meant to make it more modern, more Westernised (In this thesis, the word ‘Western’ refers to practices common in Australia and New Zealand). Whether or not it was desirable that the System be more Westernised is not clear-cut but that is not the subject of the present treatise.

Given that there was a period of only three months to complete the two tasks, the Panel needed to commence work immediately and move quickly … not common features of Tongan life.

Fortunately, the Panel soon evolved into an efficient and effective team, with one member having considerable personal and cultural knowledge and the other with some planning and writing skills.

It was soon learned that previous reviews of the System had been ineffectual. One was carried out in 1996 and only a few pages of the reviewer’s report could be located. In 2004, a three-person review team came from Australia for two weeks and prepared a report. It took the Panel some time to locate a copy of their report. This report had languished on a shelf for five years and had not been referred to by the System’s planners when they prepared their 2005-09 strategic plans. Those planners had made dozens of copies of their plan but it appeared that they had not been disseminated.

So, at least two earlier review reports and the extant (in 2009) plans had had little impact on the actions, or indeed the consciousness, of people working in the System.

In an attempt to ensure that their review report did not meet a similar fate, the Panel put in place a process which ensured that the report was well known and was considered during the design of the 2010-14 education strategic plan. Features of this process included the following.

1. A great deal of consultation with Principals, Education Officers and other stakeholders during the preparation of the report.
2. The presentation of a draft report to Principals, Deputy Principals and Education Officers at a School Leaders' Retreat held in September, 2009, followed by a revision of the draft based on leaders' reactions.
3. The expectation that Principals would make staff members aware of the report when they returned to their schools.
4. The Panel who wrote the report would also be responsible for preparing the strategic plan which was to reflect the findings of the review.
5. One of the Panel members (Dr Samate, based in the System's Education Office) would guide the development and implementation of the plan for 2010-14. (It was not expected, at the time, but it evolved that I returned to Tonga for visits in four subsequent years to help monitor and advise on the implementation of the plan.)

After doing as much research as possible in the education office, the Panel then visited almost all schools and school communities in the System. This involved at least one visit to each of the schools and colleges on Tongatapu, Lifuka, Vava'u

and Eua. Transport and time constraints meant that it was not possible for us to visit the two schools on Nomuku.

The visits always included walking around the school, observing classes and teachers and having long interviews with principals and some other staff members. Where the interviewees' command of the English language was not sufficient, Dr Samate acted as translator. On three occasions (on the islands of Lifuka, Vava'u and Eua), the Panel had community consultations and there was one formal consultation with a former-students' association (which included the country's deputy prime minister as one of the 'old boys'). In addition, there were a great many informal conversations at every opportunity.

Based on all the observations made, the Panel then prepared a draft form of a review report which could be readily comprehended by the school leaders. Care was taken to ensure that the size, the complexity, the layout and the language of the report was not too far outside the experience of the principals. (Even so, the budgeting section of the plan caused some confusion. For instance, several leaders assumed that costs listed referred to suggested changes whereas they really referred only to the process of making decisions to change.)

The report was named *"Let your light shine"* referring to a Bible verse probably familiar to most people employed in the System –

> You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16, New Revised Standard version).

The name of the report was a reminder to everyone involved in the education system of the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga to be the best people they can be and to show the best way to other people travelling the same road as themselves.

The draft report was presented at a retreat held for principals and other school leaders and was discussed in some detail. This was the first retreat or conference for principals that had been held in the memory of the participants. The gathering together of school leaders like this was a significant development and became an annual event.

Some amendments were then made to the report and it was subsequently adopted by the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education Committee.

The report had five main sections:

A. Introduction,
B. "Where we've been" (in essence, a history of the System),
C. "Where we are now" (a description of the Panel's observations of the way the System was functioning in 2009),
D. "Where we might be" (some options in response to the observations),
E. Conclusion and vision.

Because of a lack of time and expertise, the Panellists decided not to consider most financial aspects of the System. That would require a different panel with different skills and with a great deal more time and would require the participation of the wider church organisation.

The layout of the report was unusual in that sections C and D were presented side by side. This enabled a reader to see easily some suggested response options next

to the observations which prompted those suggestions without having to turn to another page.

The next step for the Panel was the designing of a strategic plan to cover the following five years, based on the review report. Despite the limited time available, this task was made a realistic one by the layout of the report.

The plan spelled out means (programs) for achieving goals stated on its first page:

1. Establish a rational, transparent organisational structure in order to provide a suitable education for students at early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels (PROGRAM A).
2. Develop and maintain a skilled and committed Christian teaching force (PROGRAM B).
3. Have well-constructed and well-maintained school buildings and suitable learning resources (PROGRAM C).
4. Teach a realistic curriculum in a Christian manner (PROGRAM D).
5. Use an assessment system which reflects the above goals (PROGRAM E).
6. Involve all stakeholders in appropriate ways in the education system (PROGRAM F).
7. Demonstrate that the education offered by the FWCT Education System is qualitatively different from that of other providers (PROGRAM G).

The plan was named *"…that they may see your good works"*, again a reference to the Biblical quotation mentioned above.

This plan was then approved by the FWCT Education Committee with some small modifications and thus became the policy of the church. It was now up to the President of the Education System and his staff to implement the plan.

Second Visit – Professional Development for Teachers

The following year, I returned to Tonga with the expectation of observing progress being made with the implementation of the strategic plan and of carrying out some traditional professional development with teachers working in the System. For three months this was what I did, often accompanied to schools by the other Panel member and other Senior Education Officers. The practice at the time was for a group of officers to visit a school for several days and to 'inspect' it. This inspection was mainly about records – lesson plans, attendance figures (staff and students), finance statements – but did not normally include professional development. These visits also included traditional Tongan hospitality, especially if the schools were located on outer islands. This hospitality, to a palangi, occupied a good deal of time which might have been spent 'more profitably'. It also meant that little or no teaching and learning was going on; schools were virtually closed during the visit.

The professional development that I led was meant to be of a modelling nature – that is, I explained what I was going to do and then conducted a lesson as I would in Tasmania, with the teachers in the roles of students. This was followed by discussion, often lead by Dr Samate. Two aspects of teaching stressed in these demonstration lessons were the need for a variety of activities in the lesson and the need to acknowledge the three modes of learning (auditory, visual and kinaesthetic). These are very basic teaching skills which were seldom observed in Tongan classrooms.

In addition, because many cases of corporal punishment were observed by the Panel, there were training sessions on positive behaviour management. Tongan government education regulations forbid corporal punishment in schools but, because it is a widely practised form of disciplining in homes and in the country generally, it is accepted in schools. When I expressed concerns about the legal, as well as moral, implications of this practice, I was assured by an education officer that "We Tongans are not ready to change yet". When the possibility of legal action by irate parents was raised, along with the financial implications for schools and the System, the idea was shrugged off. I was learning something about different cultural values.

I learned more when I observed classroom lessons after the skills training and saw that, in most cases, nothing changed. It was pointed out to me that, while my lessons were interesting, entertaining even, they had nothing to do with Tongans' understanding of teaching practice. This understanding was largely restricted to 'chalk/talk' techniques with a great deal of copying of teachers' notes from the blackboard into exercise books. Any 'bad' behaviour, or even mistakes, was greeted with the use of corporal punishment (striking with a piece of wood). This was, apparently, the way many of the teachers themselves had been taught and was to them, essentially, the only valid way to do their jobs.

Figure 25 A Tongan classroom – tables, benches and a blackboard

After the skills development sessions, there was little change observed in classroom teaching performance. It was noticed that principals often were not present for the sessions so had little idea what I had demonstrated. It also became apparent that one of the features of the planning process mentioned on page 6 of the review report, namely *c. The expectation that Principals would make their staff members aware of the report when they returned to their schools*, proved to be a misguided hope. It appeared that the participants in the 2009 retreat went away feeling positive but did not share their knowledge or feelings with their staffs.

During this second visit, another palangi (white person), an experienced literacy consultant from one of the Australian state education authorities, came for a fortnight, to introduce an approach to literacy assessment which she had been using with some success with fellow Australian teachers. Tongan teachers enjoyed the sessions with this palangi but her work appeared to have been forgotten a week later

and had little or no impact. ‘Parachuting in’ experts seemed likely to be an unprofitable exercise.

These experiences led me to conclude that there had to be a better way to raise the level of teaching skills among Tongan teachers, at least in the Western sense.

During this visit, a second retreat was organised by the Panel (i.e. the designers of the strategic plan). Much of the retreat was focussed on the strategic plan and its implementation. Very little of the plan prepared a year earlier had made a difference. It became clear to me that schools were looking to the Education Office to take a lead in the implementation. Some conversations had taken place but there was little obvious change. It remained unclear about which education officer was responsible for each area of responsibility.

The logo of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System includes a depiction of a hermit crab, an animal which does not grow its own shell but uses another crab’s discarded shell until it grows out of it. Then, it finds a new, bigger shell and moves into that. The crab is common in Tonga. So, the theme of the School Leaders’ retreat during my second visit became *“It’s time … for the hermit crab to change its shell”*. It seemed to resonate with participants and a more serious and better-informed attempt to implement the strategic plan emerged.

To me, it all seemed straightforward; the plan was clear and was approved and all that had to be done was to implement it. I was not allowing for some cultural differences, however.

The West and the East

The ancient (fourth/fifth centuries B.C.) Greek philosophers, Socrates and his students Plato and Xenophon and Plato's student, Aristotle, among them, taught Westerners to think in a logical way.

Socrates' logical pedagogy, his series of questions, ever after known as 'the Socratic method', irked a great many citizens, since the abysmal ignorance of the person being questioned would be gradually, painfully, inexorably exposed to public view. He seemed to take particular delight in puncturing the pomposity of Athens' leading citizens. Socrates' questioning was relentless, he was impatient with imprecision and he goaded his fellow Athenians out of their complacency (Cahill, 2004, p. 158-9). He was forced to commit suicide.

> (Aristotle) was especially drawn to the study of logic – he was, indeed, its formal inventor – and he laid out all the basic rules for logical thinking. (He) was a categorizer who divided different forms of knowledge from one another, especially philosophy from the physical sciences (Cahill, 2004 p. 187).

Because Westerners have been following the lead of those ancient Greeks for more than two millennia, it might be tempting for them to assume that 'rational, logical' thinking is the natural order of things and that linear thought is the universal way of thinking.

Logically is not the only way to think, however.

On the other side of the world, a near-contemporary of Socrates and the other Greeks, the Chinese philosopher, Mencius (or Mengzi) had different ideas. He believed that the basic qualities of 'heart-mind' – sympathy, shame, deference,

judgment – are the characteristics that make a human being really human. These qualities he called the four cardinal virtues and he went on to claim that sympathy leads to co-humanity, shame leads to rightness, deference leads to propriety and judgment leads to wisdom. Everyone, according to Mencius, has a 'heart-mind' that feels for others; everyone, he believed, is basically good (Ivanhoe, 2002: Shun, 1997).

Nisbett quoted a Chinese colleague:

> You know, the difference between you and me is that I think the world is a circle, and you think it's a line. The Chinese believe in constant change, but with things always moving back to some prior state. They pay attention to a wide range of events; they search for relationships between things; and they think you can't understand the part without understanding the whole. Westerners live in a simpler, more deterministic world; they focus on salient objects or people instead of the larger picture; and they think they can control events because they know the rules that govern the behaviour of objects (2003, p. xiii).

The Tongans

The Pacific island group which appeared to be most under missionary domination in the nineteenth century was Tonga, where missionaries were the only foreign influence. "In the absence of settlers and bullying consuls to provoke crises as in Tahiti and Hawai'i, and the lack of any cause for 'gunboat diplomacy', the only (European) guidance provided for Tongans in nation-building was that provided by the Wesleyan missionaries" (Campbell, 2003, p. 93).

Yet, despite nearly two centuries of Western occupation of the kingdom and of Christianity, it is likely that the Tongans' way of thinking is more like that of the eastern world than it is of the Western world. For instance, Nisbett pointed out that "Debate is almost as uncommon in modern Asia as in ancient China. In fact the whole

rhetoric of argumentation that is second nature to Westerners is largely absent in Asia" (2003, p. 73) and Samate described Tongan students' difficulties with argumentation as "the hardest – but first – step in getting a western education" (2009, p.49).

Samate portrayed Tongans' thinking as being like "the unity of the double strand or the double layer where the individual and community, the past and the future, the Church and State and so on are two sides of the same mat … (they) exist side by side, each strengthening the other. Without the existence of the other, neither has value or worth" (2009, p. 48, 50).

Vignette 8 Fala and tapa

Traditional Tongan mats are double-stranded (fala) or double-sided (tapa). Both types, made by Tongan women, often working in groups, are remarkably strong and difficult to pull apart.

She referred to the British university doctoral thesis of her colleague, Mele'ana Puloka, in which she asserted that the traditional way of thinking for Tongans is spiral, compared with the linear and logical thinking of Westerners; Puloka further asserted that unity of the Tongan 'spiral thinking' and the 'unity of God in the thinking of the Tongans' are also double strands and layers that belong together.

Samate continued:

> Spiral thinking has the loop of authority in the centre (which can be God, your auntie, your teacher, faifekau, parents, wife) with networks of human relationships in the context of social and cultural systems of understanding. Tongan logic starts with who, not with what or why. This kind of thinking is usually called 'scatter head thinking' by linear thinkers and the message

> may become different and corrupted by the time it gets to the last loop of the spiral, which is part of the process (2007, p. 49).

Thus, the impact of a message is determined more by the issuer of the message than by the reason for the message or even the message itself.

Because they think in different ways, it is often difficult for Tongans and palangis to understand each other. Tongans who go overseas to study frequently experience dislocation because their way of thinking is so different from what they encounter at overseas schools and universities. Tongans are accustomed to accepting the voice of authority. Similarly, palangis find it difficult to understand the Tongan way of going about things (Samate, 2007, p. 49).

Mele and Ma'ata

Most Tongans, especially teachers in the Church System, are knowledgeable about the Bible and would be familiar with the account in The Gospel According to St Luke regarding a visit made by Jesus to the home of sisters Mary (Mele) and Martha (Ma'ata).

> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her' (Luke 10:38-42).

In this account, Martha busied herself with household chores, *achieving* in the Western, 'modern' manner; Mary spent her time confirming her relationship with Jesus in the eastern, 'traditional' manner.

In another sequence featuring the two sisters (John 12:1-8), Martha again does the serving while Mary attends to Jesus – in this case anointing his feet with precious ointment.

Byrne (2009, p. 102) explored the significance of feminism in these two passages.

- On one hand, Luke might be showing Jesus as defending Mary's right to be free from traditional women's work in order to receive from him the kind of instruction that will equip her for leading action in the community, just like the male disciples.
- On the other hand, Martha's current activity could be seen as effective and leading actions and Jesus' commendation of Mary is a stratagem (on Luke's part) to return women to a passive role more in keeping with traditional views.

Whatever Luke's purpose, Tongans are more likely to identify with Mary than would many Westerners to whom, Nisbett suggested, "there's not much point in concentrating on relationships. It's the results that count" (2003, p. 75).

Third Visit – School Planning

Most of my time and effort during the third, shorter (two months) visit was spent preparing for the third three-day retreat for school leaders.

Because it had become clear that teachers were unlikely to show much initiative, the role and importance of principals in the school development process assumed greater significance. So, the theme of the 2011 retreat was "Just like yeast" referring to the effect one ingredient, yeast, has in bread production; it was a reminder

that it is the action of one ‘ingredient’ in a school (the principal) that makes a huge difference between one school and another.

Tongans are familiar with metaphors, similes and stories; they figure prominently in speeches, hymns, class lessons and in ordinary conversations. They are an aspect of the peoples’ strong oral tradition. So, the use of themes such as light, crab and yeast is not only acceptable but generally helpful in the understanding of ideas. Metaphors can appear in everyday situations such as the words of a hymn or the use of an organisation’s motto.

Vignette 9 Metaphor of a Leadership Style in a Hymn

A particularly good example of the Tongan use of metaphors is the translation of the hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus”. It is a hymn which says that when we have a problem, Jesus is there to help and to share the load.

The man who translated it into Tongan (Rev. Dr. J.E. Moulton) wisely chose not to simply translate each word but told a story with the same message - *A man worked in the family’s plantation with his young son. On the way home after the work, they carried a heavy bunch of bananas on a pole, one end on the father’s shoulder and the other end on the boy’s shoulder. As they walked, the load slowly slid down the pole towards the boy, increasing his share of the weight. Whenever the load became too great for his son, the father pulled the bunch towards his own end of the pole. Thus, the boy was never expected to bear more than he could manage.*

Vignette 10 Metaphor as Motto

Many an organisation has a motto which is meant to indicate its central values and goals. So, a local high school might have "Striving for excellence" as its motto; a city might aim at "Progress with prudence". Many mottoes are in Latin, presumably in the belief that greater gravity and significance are thereby attached.

The logo and motto of the FWCT Education System is revealing. The logo includes a depiction of a hermit crab and the motto is '*Ko Tonga Mounga Ki He Loto*', usually translated as 'The Mountain of Tonga is its Heart'. In other words, the rock of Tonga, the immovable part of the country, is the quality of its people. The hermit crab indicates that an outer skin (the shell) can be discarded when it is no longer needed but the 'heart' of the people remains.

Individual school plans received a great deal of attention during the retreat and the reliance on initiative from head office was lessening, although it remained clear that corporate planning was an idea unfamiliar to Tongans. Some principals who had had more Western experience started to provide some leadership among their colleagues and attempts were made to design school plans (in part, at least).

One of the activities during the retreat was a phi-sort. This type of group survey is described in greater detail later in this treatise. At this point, it is sufficient to indicate that, using the survey, school leaders identified: helping students live Christian lives, and helping students become familiar with the Bible as among the most important aspects of FWCT school life (ranked 1 and 4 out of 24 items) and gave only moderate support to sport and music in their schools (12 and 14). During the discussion which followed, however, it was clear that the reality is far removed

from these ideals of Christian education. Originally, this survey was meant as a light-hearted activity but it produced one of the most significant hours of the retreat.

One important development during this time was the appointment of a new Deputy President of Education. This officer had, until recently, been the country's Minister for Education for six years. Before that, he had been principal of Tupou College (a System school) and had gained a Doctorate from a Canadian university. He was also an ordained minister of the FWCT. The new Deputy President of Education brought to the System his considerable presence, knowledge, energy and authority and by the time of my fourth visit, he had made an impact.

Fourth Visit – Mentoring Leaders

Before the new Deputy President's appointment, the organisational structure of the Head Office was unclear. Formally, there was a list of position titles but they were not assigned to particular individuals. So, nobody knew who was responsible for which aspect of System oversight. In 2009 and 2010, I had proposed alterations to this situation but little actually changed. One of the Deputy's early tasks was to organise the Head Office so that everybody could see easily who was responsible for what (strategic plan, page 5). By March 2012, a satisfactory structure had been designed and changes in personnel made possible its implementation (Appendix F). One important feature of this new structure was the releasing of the President to carry out his wider (including church and community) responsibilities, leaving his deputy to manage the office on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, the new deputy was able to keep a closer eye on the activities of the education officers and the *en masse* school visits ceased. Principals learned which officer to contact depending on their issue of concern and officers were able to

develop greater expertise in their areas (such as, personnel, property, curriculum, planning, staff development). Thus, the role of the officers (their titles now became 'Officer in Charge') changed from one of 'inspecting' to one of constructive support and action. Examples of this change are outlined below.

- The President of Education oversaw the building of new premises for Maamaloa School (page 10 of the strategic plan), appointed a contact person to help overseas volunteers (page 6) and a project officer to tap into overseas resources (page 6) and secured a significant increase in salary levels for all teachers (page 7).
- The Deputy President updated the original 2009 strategic plan, indicating where implementation had been completed or had been started.
- The Officer in Charge of Policy and Planning revised and expanded the booklet of policies (position descriptions, working conditions, discipline, procedures, etc.) and provided one to each principal and then developed a procedure to help individual resistant principals to write and implement their school plans in alignment with the System plan (pages 12 and 18 of the strategic plan). She also finalised the accreditation of a diploma course (from the University of the South Pacific) for the System's agriculture college (page 5).
- The Officer in Charge of Asset Management started a process of helping principals to determine their building maintenance needs (Although the strategic plan had indicated a need for principals to "Establish a rolling three year plan to ensure that all maintenance is brought up to date by the end of 2014", they had not done so – they appeared to resist any form of planning, even something as simple as listing some maintenance needs.) (Page 10).

- The Officer in Charge of Schools oversaw the establishment/upgrading of 23 System kindergartens (page 4) and further bilingual primary school provisions (page 4) and started a regime of regular professional development for practising primary teachers (page 7).
- The Officer in Charge of Human Resources established and maintains a database recording the professional development opportunities attended by teachers and other personnel; this attendance is connected to proposed salary increases (page 7).
- The Officer in Charge of Quality Assurance began work on Program D (Curriculum – pages 12 and 13) and Program E (Assessment – page 14).
- The Director of Higher Education, cooperating with the Teacher Training Coordinator, introduced a two-year course for practising teachers (accredited and supported by a New Zealand tertiary institute) leading to a Diploma in Education (page 7).

In accordance with the strategic plan (pp. 7,8), a retreat was planned as in past years, with consideration being given to feedback results after the previous retreat; viz. two days in length, different venue, during school time, earlier in the year, more time for discussion, generally the same format.

There was some concern that while attention was being given to modernising the System, school leaders should not lose sight of the long history of the System or of the progress made in recent years. So, the theme of the retreat held during my fourth visit was *"Look ahead … but check the mirror"*.

Figure 22 depicts participants involved in a group activity at this retreat

Figure 26 Principals at a retreat

As planning proceeded for this retreat, an interesting tendency became apparent; because previous retreats had been seen as successful and useful, other branches of the church wanted to take advantage of the fact that school leaders were assembled in one place. Thus officers from the finance section wanted to have one full day of the retreat to address the principals (giving them information which could have been written down, posted and read); the ministry section wanted time for a representative to talk to those school leaders who are also ordained ministers or *faifekau* (about sixty education leaders are also faifekau). The organisers of the retreat were concerned that, once principals started focussing on finance, that issue would dominate thinking for the rest of the retreat. So, they allowed these two sections only a small amount of time, insisting that the purpose of the retreat was not an opportunity for information dissemination; rather it was for the development of the leadership attributes of education leaders. Had a palangi (who was not part of the hierarchical

structure of the church or of the society) not been one of the main organisers, the other sections might well have taken over more of the event. So, apart from two late-afternoon timeslots, the retreat was planned to be run *by* educators, *for* educators, *about* educational matters.

This seemingly small matter is mentioned because it was one of many which demonstrate the importance, sometimes subtle, of rank in Tongan society and in the church. The finance officers even involved the head of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga in an attempt to influence the organisers.

The plan for the retreat was that most of the first day was to be taken up with strategic plan-related issues (including each Officer in Charge explaining the nature of his/her role and indicating progress being made) and most of the second day with mentoring practices and other professional development foci. In practice, Tongans' attitude to time (20 minute speeches lasted for 50 minutes) and their discomfort with planning (arranged talks had to be delayed because speakers remembered that they had other commitments or details of the arrangements for some upcoming event suddenly 'needed' to be disseminated by a senior officer) meant that the professional development part of the retreat was squeezed to just a few hours. Feedback from participants indicated that they regarded this as inappropriate and that future retreats should be devoted entirely to the improvement of leadership attributes, to teaching and learning and to opportunities (through discussions, for instance) for these new skills and attitudes to become embedded or internalised. This attitude was a huge step in the modernising process of the System. Another huge step was the obvious assumption that retreats served a useful purpose and would continue in future years.

The difference between organisational staff meetings and professional development sessions with school staffs was discussed and some principals, now well aware of the danger that urgent, or even non-urgent, organisational matters could easily squeeze out important professional development, declared that they were determined to separate the two in future. There appeared to be a growing acceptance of the need for on-going professional (and leadership) development; written feedback indicated this quite strongly. There remained, however, the problem of who would deliver this development. Fortunately, changes in Head Office structure and personnel could help to provide some solutions.

The retreat received attention on local radio, television and newspapers, thus raising the profile, and possibly the stature, of the System's schools and their teachers.

I continued to work in schools and colleges, concentrating mainly on improving the basic classroom skills of teachers and mentoring skills of senior staff members and also by helping principals identify maintenance priorities and solutions. Throughout this time, frequent reference was made to the strategic plan, its purposes and procedures.

A welcome (to me) development was by now apparent. A Ministry of Education regulation forbade teachers from administering corporal punishment and this was being enforced around the country. It appeared that some elements of Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem and exosystem (see Figure 4) were seeping through to the microsystem as Western concepts of discipline and legal processes started to affect everyday life in schools and homes. I was told that several teachers had been sued by parents for assaulting their children; some researchers from the Tongan

Women's Centre claimed that "the most frequent assaulters of girls were fathers and teachers" (Morton 1996, p. 200-210).

So, schools needed to take the issue rather more seriously than they had in past years. I conducted several workshops with System teachers about positive behaviour management and two schools outside the System (an Anglican secondary school and a Church of Tonga secondary school) invited me to lead workshops with their staff members. The management of student behaviour in a positive way is not part of the Tongan way of doing things and teachers will struggle with the approach. But now they have no choice – they must develop the skills and attitudes necessary to manage behaviour in a manner that is legal, humane, ethical and effective – even if it is not *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan traditional custom).

The teachers who had most difficulty with the idea of changing disciplining approaches to a more positive one were the head tutors, especially male head tutors. These were the senior staff members responsible for discipline in the schools. They saw the change of approach as a challenge to their role in the school and to their 'expertise'. They told me with some pride that they are feared by students and teachers and they certainly did not see themselves in any counselling role. Following are three examples I witnessed of how male head tutors coped with proposed professional development sessions about positive behaviour management in three different high schools.

1. One man deliberately stayed away from a session, seated very obviously in his office.

2. A second one began a session angrily stating that positive techniques were ‘not Tongan’ (within an hour he was asking for a further training session so that all his colleagues could learn about them).
3. A third man sat sullenly through a session making derisory *sotto voce* comments to people sitting near him and, at other times, pretending to be asleep.

This issue appears to be one of the more difficult for Tongan teachers to accept, perhaps because they are generally resistant to any change in the way they work but this is one matter which they cannot ignore any longer. It remains to be seen if principals have enough strength and knowledge to counter negative attitudes about positive behaviour management - the approach they endorse officially and have a System policy about and which is legal. It seems that Bronfenbrenner’s outer systems are impinging on the inner systems of Tongan culture. It is a very public issue, sometimes even appearing in the international press.

Vignette 11 Wood and Discipline

> Tonga rarely features in news broadcasts in Australia but on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s television news on May 13th, 2013, an item appeared about the senior boys in one Tongan college ‘disciplining’ other boys by striking them with pieces of wood in a manner which palangis would regard as assault but which in Tongan eyes was acceptable. Teachers hit senior boys with pieces of wood; senior boys hit junior boys with pieces of wood.

By this time, there was talk of centralising finance management of System schools. Principals, especially primary school principals, appeared to lack the skills or the time necessary to carry out this work. Given that principals need to raise funds as

well as allocate them wisely and that primary principals had full teaching loads, this lack of skills and time was not surprising. Whether this talk translates into action will take time to become clear.

Fifth Visit – Identifying the Next Step

During previous visits, I became aware of the need (by Western standards) for maintenance of school buildings. Maintenance is not a traditional part of the Tongan way of life; in past centuries, buildings were not meant to last so keeping them in good order was not necessary. When Western-style buildings were constructed, the attitude to maintenance did not change; nor did the degree of relevant knowledge and skill. So, by 2013, many FWCT school buildings were in a poor state. On this visit, I was accompanied by two volunteer Tasmanian builders whose task it was to train senior students and appropriate adults in the attributes needed for good maintenance (Figure 22). This step, agreed to with enthusiasm by senior officers of the System, was a part of the strategic plan for the System.

Figure 27 Volunteer training Tongan boy in maintenance skills

The visit was for two months and was to include professional development for all staff on Tongatapu and to observe progress made with the implementation of the strategic plan. As an indication of how alien is planning to the Tongans, there were no words in the language for 'plan' or 'vision' (in the sense of looking forward) before Western missionaries arrived. The words now used are Tonganised versions of the English words – '*palani*' and '*visione*'. Nonetheless, the Deputy President of Education (acting as President at the time) produced a modified version of the plan indicating what had been achieved. In the new document, he claimed, somewhat optimistically perhaps, that 50% of the work had been done. What was clear was that the *idea* of planning had taken root and that progress was being made in implementing

the plan. The Acting President had also designed an organizational structure (Appendix G) which was a further step towards implementing the plan.

The professional development offered was for senior staff in schools, for classroom teachers and for education officers. The officers were more and more involved in providing professional development for other teachers. I was also invited again to work with the staff of the Anglican secondary school located in Nuku'alofa in the area of positive behaviour management. The use of corporal punishment has been banned but Tongans are struggling to make the transition from traditional methods of behaviour management to more positive, Western methods. During my fifth visit, the Tongan government was discussing a bill about domestic violence, a major problem in the country, and there was a great deal of talk-back radio on the subject. I heard one cabinet minister (opposed to a proposed reform) ask: "If I beat up my wife and go to gaol, what right has the devil (i.e. his wife) got to keep living in *my* house?" While the country's leaders have such negative attitudes, it will be unlikely that all ordinary teachers will see the need to use positive techniques in the classroom, regardless of the law.

During this visit, an education project was under way with the support of the Tongan government and with the involvement of an Australian consulting firm. It was designed to help the leadership abilities of principals and leaders across the education systems, government and church-based.

Leadership has been identified as a major obstacle by the government in the improvement of educational provision at the secondary level. In 2012 the directors of most of the school systems agreed to the 'coaching' of secondary school principals in their leadership roles in an AusAID/Tongan government initiative. It is recognised

that each school operates in its own way but feedback from principals suggests that: (a) it is difficult for an allocated external coach to fit in with the daily routines and regular complications of running a school in Tonga, and (b) there is reported to be little discussion about the nature and expectations of the FWCT Education System and the way individual schools operate before suggesting changes for implementation.

"It is difficult to see how this initiative will benefit the FWCT schools in any long-term and lasting way without true partnership and collaboration between the government and church educators based on more than a 'meeting of directors' basis" (Tu'i'onetoa, 2012, p. 55). I was present when this initiative began in early 2012 and, in late 2013, was unable to see many changes in place, except in social interaction among principals from the different systems. It appeared to be yet another imposed approach which failed to take Tongan culture into account.

There was no school leaders' retreat during this visit but a half-day gathering of leaders was held. The President of the FWCT opened the gathering and spoke about what the church expected of its teachers. The remainder of the time was spent in professional development activities, which I led.

Figure 28 Aligning the planets – A demonstration lesson

While some teachers find it difficult to adopt new forms of classroom practice, a few are showing considerable promise. During this visit, for example, I observed a young male primary school teacher whom I had mentored in the past and who was now demonstrating a high level of competence and commitment. In addition, two trainee male teachers showed considerable ability and imagination while teaching large classes in a secondary school. It was possibly no coincidence that all three of these stand-out teachers are young and male. An observation I made of one teacher was indicative of these exceptions (Vignette 12 refers to this).

Vignette 12 Modelling a Lesson

During my fourth visit, with teachers acting as the class, and after a discussion of the kinaesthetic mode of learning, I demonstrated teaching a lesson about the Solar System. The lesson included people moving in 'orbit' around the 'Sun' in the playground. Those taking part enjoyed their involvement but most appeared to believe that such an active lesson was not part of 'real' teaching.

One teacher, however, understood the possibilities and a year later I observed him teaching similar lessons, making the most of all learning modes, being creative and providing an enjoyable learning experience for his students.

I saw few teachers demonstrate this understanding and it was not clear why this particular teacher was different. It is to be hoped that he will be valued and, possibly, promoted before he is lured away to a better-paid teaching post in a government or Mormon school.

There is a shortage of competent teachers in the System and there is also a shortage of competent leaders. There is a limited pool of senior officers and they may

be moved around by the President of the church in an attempt to find the best combination. One somewhat bizarre example of this was his changes of four senior officers among four senior positions at the end of 2013 for 2014. He moved the President of Education to Principal of Tupou College; he moved the Principal to Deputy President of Education; he moved the Deputy President to Director of Tupou Tertiary Institute and he moved the Director to President of Education – a complete circle (as demonstrated in Figure 24).

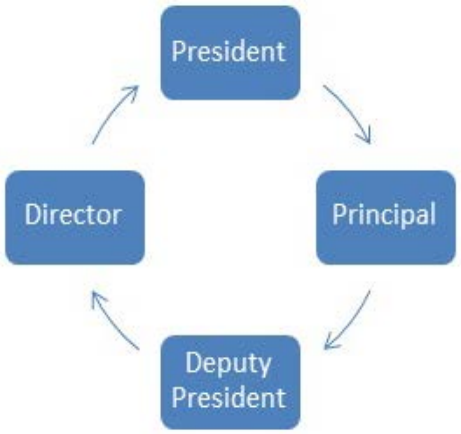


Figure 29 The transfer circle

One significant development during the past year had been the establishment or upgrading of 23 kindergartens in the System. The upgrading included the basic training offered to the staffs in these schools. In addition, more equipment and other facilities became available. The impetus for this was provided by a young education officer who had relevant experience in New Zealand; funding was made available by an Australian NGO. This same officer, again with support from the NGO, is developing education services for children with disabilities, a group largely ignored by the Tongan education scene in the past.

The improvement in the provision of early childhood education is a bright spot in the System's current operation. It is hoped that the situation is not totally dependent on the skills and efforts of one person and that the FWCT and its education system will allow and encourage continuing development in this area.

The hospitality experienced by me and the other volunteers was as it had been in the past – warm, friendly, generous and punctuated by food. It was made clear, by me, that this visit was expected to be my final one but that contact would be maintained. Some local education leaders had, by this time, developed some of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to devise the next plan (perhaps a three-year plan), using our earlier plan as a model.

In short, the five visits followed this pattern regarding the implementation of the strategic plan:

1. First Visit - Review and Strategic Plan presented,
2. Second Visit - Little progress observed on implementation of plan,
3. Third Visit - Stirrings of implementation,
4. Fourth Visit - Some significant progress in implementation,
5. Fifth Visit - A greater level of acceptance and ownership of plan; talk of the next strategic plan.

During my fifth visit (the fourth year of The Strategic Plan) the Acting President of Education produced an updated version of the original plan which included words similar to the following:

> In general, over 50% of this plan has been achieved; some of the items have been postponed because of other issues such as time and the need to get more information. A job well done for the Education System and

> we hope that by the end of 2014 almost all the items in the plan should be partially or completely achieved.

It appeared that, despite my misgivings after the lack of early progress with the strategic plan, some understanding and commitment to change had emerged by my final visit. Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006, p. 8) perceived a connection between people's overall view and their commitment to quality and effectiveness on one hand and their level of responsibility and accountability on the other. If that perception and the Acting President's comments are valid, there is cause for some optimism regarding the ability and determination of Tongan education leaders to help to bring about the changes they seek.

PART B -THREE STAGES OF RESEARCH

Throughout this project, I have used an action research approach, as explained in Chapter 1. This approach was used, not just in the data collection and analysing stages, but from the time I first arrived in Tonga and before I was actually involved in preparation for this thesis. It was largely about observations and then making decisions, initiating actions, observing changes and making further decisions, thus continuing a cycle. McNiff (2001) summarised these steps as: 1. A critical point in practice has been reached; 2. A new direction is needed; 3. Avenues for new directions are chosen; 4. Monitoring and evaluating new directions; 5. A change in direction occurs in light of these evaluations. All these stages could be observed as my work in Tonga evolved, with stages 4 and 5 being repeated a number of times. The methodology I used was also somewhat akin to autoethonography (i.e. containing elements of autobiography and ethnography). Autobiography in that it is about my own experiences, ethnography in that it is a study of a culture's practices, values and beliefs for the purpose of helping those within the culture to achieve certain ends.

Ethnographers do this by becoming participant observers. That is what I sought to do through action research.

Manathunga (2009) wrote about research carried out across cultural boundaries and examines the consequences of a lack of intercultural sensitivity. As I had spent some time in Tonga before I began my formal research, I was aware of the potential for difficulties and was able to make use of a method for reducing difficulties and making findings more helpful.

Because of the intercultural sensitivity I had acquired over several years involvement in Tongan education, I was well aware of the likely reluctance of educators to voice opinions because of the cultural constraints against what might be regarded as 'disrespect' or even 'showing off'. So, while interviews were to be the end-point and most valuable part of the methodology I used, I believed that some preliminary steps were needed. So, I decided on a three-part procedure. The first part involved some education officers, all of whom I had worked with for some time. This stage involved those officers in discussing aspects of culture which might impact on teacher performance. One officer not involved in the discussion was the President of Education because I expected that his presence would inhibit the others. That discussion resulted in the identification of 35 relevant aspects of Tongan culture and began a process of increasing ease in voicing opinions. The next step built on the first one. A larger gathering of educators, most of whom I knew quite well, then met to discuss those aspects and to use a group activity (phi-sort) with which they were familiar. This activity, a prioritising one, meant that the participants discussed the aspects in a situation where they needed to justify their views to a few colleagues. The significance of these first two stages was that they were preparations for the third stage – interviews. Findings from the first two stages are detailed in Chapter 4. The

educators who volunteered for interviews had been involved in at least one earlier activity. The opinions expressed in the interviews are also described in Chapter 4 and form the basis of my conclusions and recommendations.

I thought it desirable to have senior Tongan educators do most of the identifying of aspects of their culture which might affect any reform of teacher development in their own System. It is unlikely that a palangi can understand the culture nearly as well as Tongans themselves. So, in all three stages of my research, it is the views of Tongans that are paramount.

Education leaders, rather than classroom teachers, were to participate because, if any reform is to happen, it will be the leaders who initiate it. Social status issues would deter many classroom teachers from expressing their views. There was also the issue of language – many classroom teachers are not sufficiently proficient with the English language to make meaningful interviews likely, whereas all the leaders have a good measure of competence with English.

Table 3
Summary of stages of data gathering

Stages	Focus	Method	People Involved
First	Identification	Discussion	9 Education Officers
Second	Prioritisation	Phi sort	44 Leaders in groups
Third	Expansion	Interviews	19 Leaders

PART C - IDENTIFICATION OF ASPECTS OF CULTURE

The first stage in the research was to identify a number of aspects of the culture which, in the opinion of senior Tongan educators, might affect the rate and nature of reform. To do this, with the approval of the President of Education and all the participants, I assembled nine education officers from the System. All were vastly experienced in Tongan education (as students, teachers, education leaders and church members and, in some cases, as parents) and five had spent some years working in education in Western countries (as teachers, as school students or as mature students studying for high degrees in universities in Australia, New Zealand, USA, Fiji and Canada). Five were faifekau. The following table explains the backgrounds of the participants (identified as i to ix) in the first stage of data collection, see Table 4.

Table 4
First stage participants- experience in education

Participants	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix
In Tonga as:									
School student	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Teacher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Education leader	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Church member	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Parent	*	*	*	*	*		*		
Overseas as:									
School student			*					*	
Teacher			*					*	
High degree	*	*	*	*				*	*

I explained the procedure which was to follow and the participants were told by the Acting President that involvement in this activity was totally voluntary and that they would not be identified.

Each participant was given an A4 sized sheet of paper on which was marked a grid with a total of thirty spaces. They were then asked to write in each space a few words indicating an aspect of Tongan culture which might affect improvement in teacher performance within their System. Each person was given some spare sheets in case they wanted to make changes. This activity was followed by a discussion of the aspects identified. As a result of the discussion, 35 frequently-mentioned aspects were identified and the aspects and their significance were explained to the writer. It was unusual for Tongans, even experienced leaders, to be asked for opinions but the

atmosphere of the meeting was sufficiently relaxed and trusting for the discussion to be constructive and, at times, even minor disagreements were aired. This was a satisfying preparation for the two later stages of the data gathering (large group activity and interviews).

PART D – PHI-SORT: PRIORITISING

The first stage (Chapter 3, Part C) of the data collection was the generation by a group of education officers of a list of aspects of Tongan culture which might have an impact on the improvement of teacher performance. The second stage was a priority allocation of those aspects by a larger group of System education leaders.

At the fifth school leaders' retreat (or leaders' gathering), a procedure which in this thesis is called a "Φ – sort" or "phi-sort" took place; this was a prioritising and sorting of the aspects identified earlier. Again, it was Tongans whose views were sought, and, again, it was with the approval of the President of Education and the agreement of everyone involved. The 44 participants were all school principals, deputy principals, senior staff from tertiary institutes and education officers. The participants formed eleven groups of four and each group had disparate members – thus, a group might include a high school deputy, a primary principal, an education officer and a tertiary leader; in each group, a majority of members were highly proficient using the English language. Most participants had participated in phi-sorts with me on previous occasions and were familiar with and comfortable with the activity.

After the necessary explanations, each group was given an envelope in which 35 slips of paper (measuring 55mm x 20mm) each showed one of the 35 aspects identified in the first stage of the research. Each group then arranged the slips in the following manner:

1. They chose from the 35 choices the two which they considered the most influential in the reform of teacher development; these they arranged in a vertical column on the right side of their work space.

2. Then, they chose the next most influential four items and arranged them in a column to the left of the first column. Thus:

4 next most influential 2 most influential

3. The third step was to identify what the group regarded as the two *least* influential aspects and place them in a column on the left side of the work space.

4. The four next least influential aspects were identified and placed in a column thus:

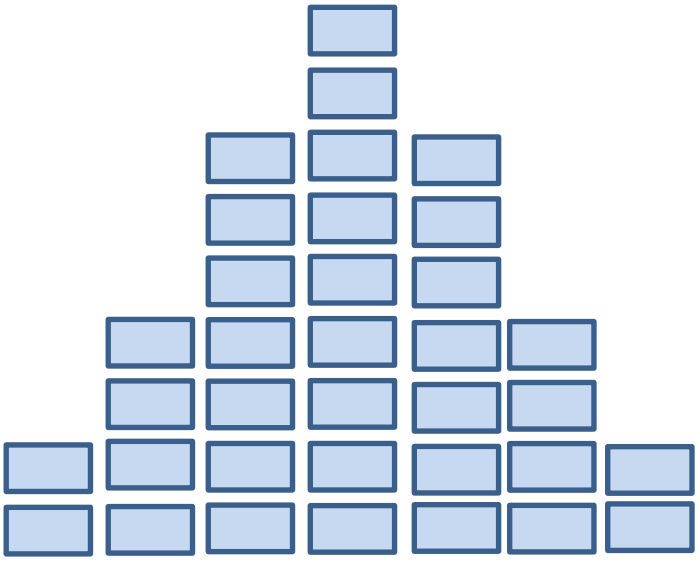
2 least 4 next least 4 next most 2 most

5. The final step at this point was to place the remaining 23 items in three columns (7 items, 9 items, 7 items) in the centre of the space. So the complete, bell-shaped display shows seven columns indicating (from left to right) an increasing level of significance identified by each group of four participants.

6. Then, the views of all eleven groups were collated as follows:

a) The items in the first (left) column were accorded a score of one; those in the second column, two; those in the third, three, and so on.

Scores



(Least) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Most)

b) Then I announced one of the aspects and each group indicated the score it had awarded it; the eleven scores were totalled; the process was continued with each of the 35 items.

c) The list of aspects was then arranged in order from highest score (the maximum possible was 11x7=77) to the lowest score (the minimum possible was 11x1=11). The result was an indication of the views of 44 participants regarding the level of influence that 35 aspects of Tongan culture could have in the reform of teacher development.

The process may seem complicated and tedious; in fact it is neither, especially as most of the participants had been involved in phi-sorts in the past. It is also a positive, enjoyable process because of the animated discussions which take place among members of the groups as each argues his/her case for placing a slip of paper in one column rather than another. Even the collating part of the process (at least among

fun-loving Tongans) is enjoyable, not least because of my inability to add numbers quickly.

PART E - INTERVIEWS

At the leaders' gathering during my fifth visit, nineteen participants (43% of those present) volunteered to be interviewed for my project. The volunteering took place after hearing an explanation of the planned process. All volunteers had been involved in the prioritising activity and some had taken part in the initial generation of the list of cultural aspects. So, they all had had experience at discussing and expressing views about the issues involved. All nineteen had a good command of the English language and lived and worked in Tongatapu (the main island). The former point is important because I am unable to speak or write in Tongan; the latter point is important because it meant that I was able to visit interviewees in the school buildings after school hours without the expense and time involved in visits to other islands.

Table 5 shows that the interviewees came from all sectors of the System and included both men and women:

Table 5
Interviewees – education sector and gender

Sector	Women	Men	Total
Kindergartens	2	0	2
Primary schools	1	3	4
Middle schools	1	1	2
Secondary schools	4	1	5
Tertiary sector	2	1	3
Officers	2	1	3
Total	12	7	19

All interviews were conducted either in the schools/colleges in which the interviewees were based or in the System's head office. Each interview lasted for about 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the interviewee's permission.

The initial interview questions were:

- How are things going in your school (the System) at the moment?
- How well do you think the teachers in your school (the System) are doing?
- How would you like it to be in a year's time; three years; ten years?
- In your vision, what would you like your teachers (principals) to be able to do?
- Can you think of anything which might help or prevent the teachers (principals) becoming like that?
- How do you think Tongan culture can help your vision for the school (System) coming about?
- How do you think Tongan culture can get in the way of your vision coming about?
- Tell me about teachers' attitudes and how they might affect your vision becoming a reality.
- How about leadership?
- How does fatalism affect the situation?
- What other aspects of Tongan culture might affect your vision?
- What do you think you can do to help bring about the school (System) you would like to see in the future?

In the course of the conversations based on these questions and follow-up questions deriving from them, the interviewees addressed the matters raised in the first two stages of the data collection. It is stressed that the interviews were

conversations leading to thoughtful consideration rather than surveys for detailed tabulation.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

PART A - IDENTIFICATION OF ASPECTS OF TONGAN CULTURE

The first stage in the research was to identify a number of aspects of the culture which, in the opinion of the nine education officers based in the System's head office, might affect the rate and nature of change in teacher development. Each officer was given a sheet of paper on which was marked a grid with a total of thirty spaces. They were then invited to write in each space a few words indicating an aspect of Tongan culture which might affect change. This activity was followed by a discussion about the aspects suggested. As a result of the discussion, 35 frequently mentioned aspects were identified and their significance was explained to me. This procedure was a preparation for the two later stages of the data gathering (large group activity and interviews).

The identified aspects are grouped, listed and explained (according to the stated views of the education officers) briefly:

1. Attitudes

- **Teachers' attitudes to teaching** – Even among teachers themselves, teaching is often not regarded as important as are other aspects of life, especially family and village concerns. Teaching does not have a high social standing and the discipline and rigour of Western education is alien to many Tongans.
- **Parents' attitude to education** (or, more accurately, what the educators believe to be the attitude of parents) – Parents generally favour the use of English in schools, partly as a way of helping their children to join the middle class. They also

prefer the city schools (FWCT middle and primary schools in rural Tongatapu are languishing while the FWCT city schools are overcrowded). They tend to have limited understanding of the importance of early childhood education, having not experienced it themselves.

- **Church expectations** – The education officers explained to me the vision and mission of the FWCT Education System: MISSION - To teach and prepare students in all aspects of life (spiritual, physical and intellectual development) according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. VISION - All young people who belong to FWCT families will receive an education from the church's education system and that this will prepare them for life as contributing members of the Tongan community and with the attributes of practising Christians.
- **Religious beliefs** – Traditional Christian beliefs and church affiliation (though not necessarily with the FWCT) are normal requisites for teachers in the FWCT Education System.

2. Hierarchy

- **Social hierarchy** – status determined by birth;
- **Social status** – status determined by achievement (including wealth and education);
- **'Parapet effect'** – Tongans are not encouraged to 'put their heads above the parapet' as it is seen to be 'showing off' and disrespectful; young teachers are deterred from expressing views or trying new approaches to teaching;
- **Leadership** – perceived quality of people in leadership positions;

- **Accountability** – not a Tongan characteristic despite Christian teachings; people (including leaders) do not accept responsibility in a Western sense but do so in cultural matters;
- **Nepotism** – senior people act to favour family or clan (kainga) at the expense of other people;
- **Number of faifekau (ordained ministers)** – all System tertiary and secondary institutions (and some others) have a number of faifekau/teachers on staff (a total of 60 in 2013);
- **Ageism** – older people have more status; a young principal is at a disadvantage if he/she has older staff to lead;
- **Fatalism** – unquestioning acceptance of circumstances; "It's not up to me; I don't have any say; God wills it or the king or the principal or somebody else said it and I have no say in it."

3. Dependence

- **Increasing use of technology** – computers in schools are often unusable and unreliable as there is a lack of technical assistance; mobile telephone use is common; television programs in English are common as is Western music; use of mobile phones and other technological devices is increasing;
- **'Palangi is best'** – also 'white is right' – assumption that anything palangi (including expertise, clothes and food) is superior to things Tongan;
- **Westernisation** – there is a constant effort to find an acceptable balance between traditional 'Tongan' values and practices and those associated with the west;

Dependence on outsiders – financial/expertise aid from other countries, including Australia, New Zealand and China; also refers to remittances and other help from the Tongan diaspora, including former students;

- **Sister-school relationships** – several FWCT schools have relationships with schools in Australia and New Zealand; usually involves visits (both ways) and donations (to Tonga);

4. Way of life

- **Low income** – FWCT teachers are poorly paid by comparison with some other Tongan teachers and many need to have extra employment;
- **Family responsibilities** – Tongans support their extended families - remittances, funerals, hospitality, school equipment is shared within a community;
- **Small, dispersed population** – small, isolated schools; secondary-aged island children must become boarders in large centres, either with their school or with relatives;
- **Slow pace of life** – admirable in many ways, but planning documents and other records are often late or non-existent; long changeover times between lessons; (Tongans use the word *fakafiefiemalie* to express this – explained to me by various people as ‘laid back’, ‘slow pace’, ‘no voice’, ‘don’t rock the boat);
- **Abuse/bullying** – what Westerners see as abuse in a classroom, Tongans see as traditional, acceptable behaviour; partly because of new laws, this is changing slowly;
- **Diet** – poor diet has impact on health and attention span; increasingly non-traditional food such as mutton flaps (from New Zealand), two-minute noodles (from China) and canned vegetables (from various overseas countries);

5. Planning

- **Oral, not written, culture** – status of communication is dependent on who is speaking; eliminates one mode of learning (visual); books and libraries not always highly valued;
- **Emphasis on past and present** – little awareness of future or cannot imagine that they can influence it so planning is an alien concept;
- **Secondary school focus** – until recently, resources, including personnel, have been available to secondary schools at the expense of primary and middle schools – kindergartens have been largely ignored; there is a hierarchy of schools;
- **Peer pressure** – conformity is an important aspect of Tongan life so anyone who attempts to step outside the norm is subjected to pressure from peers, especially on a school staff;

6. Language

- **Language issues** – ongoing debate about the use of Tongan and English in schools; many parents want English (for social status reasons); secondary school examinations are in English;
- **Exam success** – this is seen as the way for students to improve their chances in life; academic achievement is highly valued and success in vocational subjects (such as manual arts, automotive studies, hospitality studies) is much less valued;

7. Other

- **Gender issues** – outside the home and away from the family, Tongan women are usually treated as inferior to men; in the System, married women are rarely in senior

positions; the System's girls' college examination results are superior to those from the boys' college;

- **Emphasis on sport** – valued by 'everyone'; especially rugby and athletics; can interfere with school functioning; a college can become attractive to parents and students if it is seen as successful in sport;
- **Emphasis on music and dance** - similar to sport emphasis but fewer problems because they are not so competitive (while occupying a great deal of time and effort and involving more people, choral competitions do not engender the same passions as a rugby match); music can improve a school's image, confidence and reputation;
- **Drinking kava** – kava is a mild narcotic drink, normally drunk in groups of men; an important social and cultural activity; sometimes a fund-raising activity;
- **Climate** – tropical, sometimes not conducive to activity (especially physical);

At first glance, it could appear that the aspects identified by the education officers were weighted towards 'constraining' forces and away from 'promoting' ones. Many of the aspects could be viewed either/both ways, however, as became obvious later in the data collection process.

PART B – ANALYSIS OF PHI-SORT

At a gathering of 44 school principals, deputy principals, tertiary institute senior staff and education officers (based in the System's head office), all were involved in a phi-sort activity. This is a classification and prioritising activity. The phi-sort enabled the participants, working in groups, to arrange, in order of perceived significance, the aspects of Tongan culture which have influence on the System's capacity to reform and improve the

effectiveness of its classroom teachers. The permission of all participants was gained, along with the approval of the President of Education.

The scoring system, as explained in Chapter 3, resulted in the 35 aspects, first identified by the education officers, scoring as appears in the following photograph (of the sheet written up during the activity) and in Table 6 (when the results are arranged in priority order).

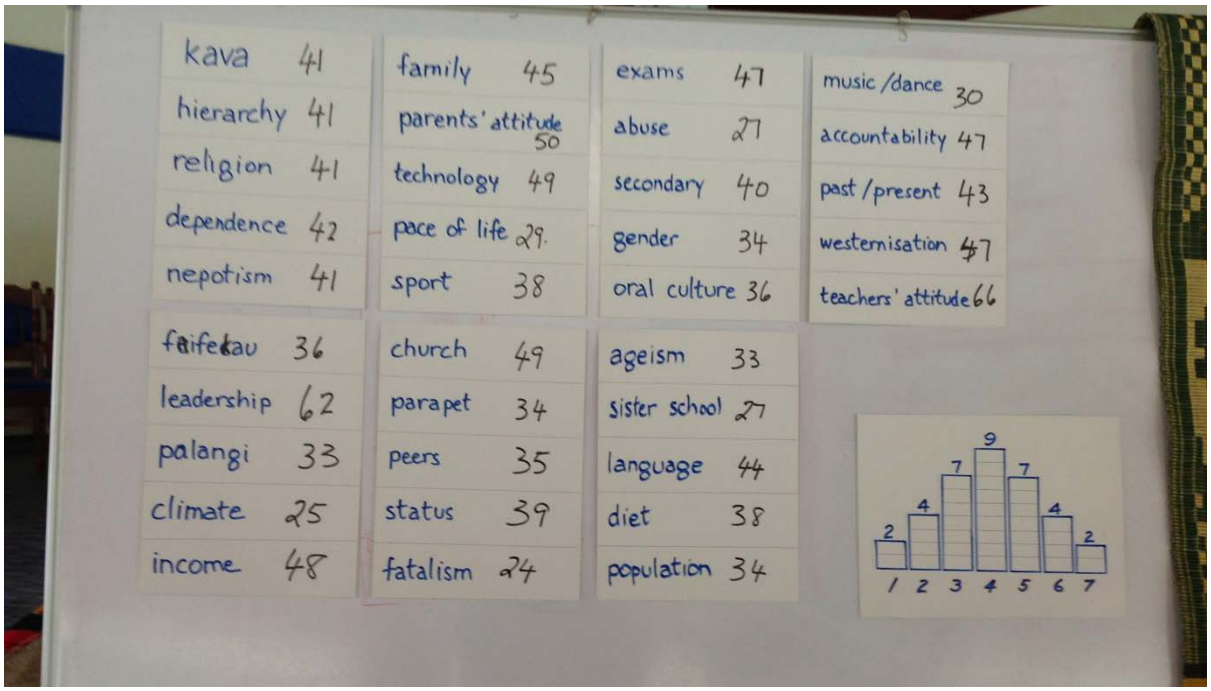


Figure 30 Results of prioritising phi-sort

As well as the total scores, this photograph shows, in the lower right corner, the number of aspects which are to be placed in each column and the scores awarded for each item.

Table 6:
Results of prioritising

Aspect of culture	Score	Rank	Aspect of culture	Score	Rank
Teachers' attitudes	66	1	Secondary focus	40	18
Leadership	62	2	Social status	39	19
Parents' attitudes	50	3	Diet	38	20
Church expectations	49	4	Emphasis on sport	38	21
Increased technology	49	4	Oral culture	36	22
Low income	48	6	Faifekau	36	22
Accountability	47	7	Peers	35	24
Examinations	47	7	Small population	34	25
Westernisation	47	7	Parapet syndrome	34	25
Family	45	10	Gender issues	34	25
Language issues	44	11	Ageism	33	28
Past/present focus	43	12	Palangis	33	28
Dependence	42	13	Music/dance	30	30
Kava drinking	41	14	Pace of life	29	31
Hierarchy	41	14	Abuse	27	32
Religion	41	14	Sister schools	27	32
Nepotism	41	14	Climate	25	34
CONTINUE NEXT COLUMN			Fatalism	24	35

Note: Highest possible score – 77; lowest possible score - 11

In summary, the education leaders concluded that the aspects of culture may be grouped in three bands of significance. The first band ends with a group of three aspects with the same score (47) and the second band ends with a similar group result (34). The aspects listed in each band have some similarities, as explained on the following page.

- Most significance: teachers' attitudes, leadership, parents' attitudes, church expectations, increased technology, low income, accountability, examinations, Westernisation.

Most of these issues are those which might be regarded as outside the perceived control of the phi-sort participants.

- Medium significance: family, language issues, past/present focus, dependence, kava drinking, hierarchy, religion, nepotism, secondary education emphasis, social status, diet, emphasis on sport, oral culture, faifekau, peers, small population, 'parapet syndrome', gender issues.

These issues tend to be concerned with traditional culture.

- Least significance: ageism, palangis, emphasis on music/dance, pace of life, abuse, sister schools, climate, fatalism.

This third group is a diverse collection indicating less concern on the part of the participants.

It is worth noting that the 'most significant' aspects, usually regarded in a negative light as it emerges in the following interviews, are seen as external to the identifiers. As such, it would appear that the participants believe that those aspects cannot be controlled by the educational 'leaders'; they are attributed to teachers (ranked 1), senior officers (ranked 2), parents (ranked 3), their church (ranked 4) and, in the cases of technology (ranked 5), accountability, examinations and westernisation (all ranked equal 7), to outside influences. Low income (ranked 6) is, perhaps, perceived as an insurmountable problem and therefore outside their control.

Weiner's Attribution Theory (1985) assumed that people try to determine why people do what they do. That is, they try to identify the causes of an event or behaviour. They tend to see their own successes as related to their own skills and qualities and other 'internal' factors; they see their failures as the result of 'external' factors, including luck and other people's deficiencies. So, it is not surprising, perhaps, that the educators involved in the prioritising process perceived the standard of classroom teaching in the System as being related to external factors.

Arranged according to the three levels of significance and in groups of related aspects, the priorities look like this:

Table 7:
Results of phi-sort

Groups of aspects	Most significance	Medium significance	Least significance
Hierarchy	leadership, accountability.	hierarchy/status, 'parapet syndrome', nepotism, faifekau.	fatalism, ageism.
Attitudes	teachers' attitudes, parents' attitudes, church expectations.	religious beliefs.	
Dependence	increased technology, Westernisation.	dependence on outsiders.	sister schools, palangis.
Way of life	low income	family responsibilities, diet, small population.	pace of life, abuse.
Planning		oral culture, peers, past/present focus, secondary education emphasis.	
Language	examinations.	language issues.	
Other		gender issues, kava.	emphasis on sport and arts, climate.

PART C – ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

During interviews, the participants offered information and opinions about the aspects of culture listed in Chapter 4, Part A (the identification of the issues by nine participants) and prioritised in Chapter 4, Part B (the sorting of the issues by 44 participants). So Chapter 4, Part C is the analysis of the comments made by 19 interviewees. Some of these comments follow Table 9.

The groups of aspects are: hierarchy, attitudes, dependence, way of life, planning, language and other. Within each group, there are several aspects, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8:
Groups of aspects of Tongan Culture

1	Hierarchy –	social, inherited, parapet, fatalism, accountability, nepotism, leadership, faifekau
2.	Attitudes	teachers, parents, church, religious beliefs
3.	Dependence	palangis, sister schools, technology, Westernisation, outsiders
4.	Way of life	low income, family responsibilities, pace of life, small population, abuse, diet
5	Planning	oral culture, past/present focus, secondary education emphasis, peers
6.	Language	language issues, examinations
7.	Other	gender, climate, sport, arts, kava

The following Table (9) indicates which interviewees (indicated with ‘x’) spoke about the nine cultural aspects listed on the left side of the table. Five of the ‘most significant’ aspects appear on the list along with three of ‘medium significance’ and one of the ‘least significant’. The interviewees are identified by the numbers 01-19.

Table 9:
Selected aspects mentioned by individual interviewees

Interviewees	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*18*	*19*
Teachers' attitudes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leadership	x	x	x	x	x		x			x				x					x
Parents' attitudes	x	x										x	x	x				x	
Church and faith	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x			x	x	x
Increased technology						x						x			x		x		
Hierarchy/status		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Faifekau			x	x	x				x	x		x		x	x	x	x		
Kava drinking									x			x		x	x				
Fatalism	x			x	x	x		x		x							x	x	

Full transcripts of the interviews were produced and the conversations were analysed on a thematic basis.

Following are some of the interviewees' comments about the effect these aspects have on classroom teaching practice in the System. The comments of the interviewees appear in italics; the letters inside square brackets indicate the identities of the interviewees; my own analysis and comments, not in italics, are interspersed among those of the interviewees.

Hierarchy

1A Social Hierarchy and Social Status

Tonga's society is founded on the concept of rank and takes two forms: hierarchy, which is dependent upon birth (family, location) and status, which is more dependent on achievement (wealth, education). The two are often connected and are treated together here. The interviewees responded to a question about whether rank is a help or a hindrance to improvement in teacher performance.

In society.

> *[J]* (Rank) *can both help and hinder; It helps that everybody knows where they stand; that's because not only the school but the church and society is very stratified. There's room for cooperating, and I think that's an important part of our culture. You come to respect and know your responsibilities in trying to do what is expected of you at whatever level you are. For example, if you are a teacher you know there is someone above you, where you are working under that person, and to me it helps the person above to know where they are and they feel they have responsibilities to the people below them.*

[F] With respect there comes obedience, to your parents, your teachers, your boss. Hierarchy has a strong link with the culture of silence. I think it is to do with hierarchical expectations and how we interpret that. So, it's like the saying that once you address the king, there are kings everywhere. So you go to school – there's a king there; you come home – there's a king there. So you go everywhere, there's a king. You become king and change things around you. A king expects to be served.

This last comment is a clue to a possible solution to the concerns about the standard of teaching – the leader can expect to be obeyed. So, senior officers are perceived to have the potential power to make the changes they wish to make.

[B] If people are well educated, they will have a good attitude to education, whatever level they are and wherever they are. If they don't have a good attitude to education they don't see it as important.

[H] Tonga has a very hierarchical system and that is translated across all aspects of our society. We have a very clear division between chiefs and commoners and it is the same thing in the church … and in the schools. I don't see Jesus coming into this world as a chief; he was a servant

In schools.

[D] Those (teachers) *at the junior level I think they will respect what we tell them to do and show respect. That's part of our culture and I think it could help, not by forcing them to do it, but they will listen to what we say.*

[F] Help with change? Yes, because teachers become kings in the classroom. I think we are talking about cultures that we need to see change from what they are. You bring about change if you are the king but the people are still

expecting you to be the king, to remain the king, to call all the shots. So you have to work out how long it will take for them to feel they can freely express themselves to me, the 'king', because I've now come out and said do that, give it your best shot.

Because it is the classroom teachers who must change most if the standard of teaching and learning is to be improved, it is useful to note that, in their own 'domain', they, like their leaders, can command respect for cultural reasons.

Servant leader.

[P] We should teach the students and the teachers to be on the same level. Otherwise, I, as principal, can't get down. I can't meet with my teachers; I can't meet with my kids. And also, the teachers should be going down to the same level as the students.

MacBeath argued that "the defining character of the servant leader is subjugation of the self, not from low self-esteem but from a highly developed sense of self which is strong enough to feel no need for deference, adulation or reinforcement" (2008, p. 26). One interviewee identified an issue with this, however:

[K] A 'Servant leader' is a Christian idea but not Tongan.

With this view I must agree. The notion of servant-leader is one of the points of tension between ancient Tongan culture and modern Christianity. Queen Salote's 'Four Core Values' (especially respect and loyalty) appear to be stronger than the teachings of Jesus Christ (which are mentioned in the System's mission statement).

Impact of hierarchical system.

While the President of Education was on leave in 2013, his absence had an effect:

[T] The (head) *office has come to a standstill. We in schools are doing the best we can to keep it going. The President has a plan that he wants to get implemented but some of the people in the office find it difficult to follow because they were not there in the making of the plan. They are probably frustrated because they don't know what to do, how to do.*

Apparently, even the senior education officers were seen as unable to act without the presence of the head of the hierarchy. There was no sign of distributed leadership. Unfortunately, "If self-efficacy and emotional intelligence are essential allies of leadership then passivity and dependency are its adversaries" (Macbeath, 2008, p. 29). Some initiative might have been expected of the officers.

[K] Anybody who tried to put his head up above the parapet gets slapped down very quickly to keep quiet.

[F] I see there will be some concerns, especially within our own hierarchical system – interpretations of respect and so forth. I think there will be some concerns from the majority of people about allowing kids to speak out to their parents, elders and teachers.

[D] From the community … those from rich family will be treated better

[R] (The hierarchy system) *can be very helpful in the education scene if the vision is shared by the people who have the voice … if you get your noble or church*

minister on-side then you're going to have a much better show to, for example, create these district high school ideas (small, local secondary schools) *than if you try to do it from the bottom up. Vision-wise, it really has to come from the top down*

[I] if you don't have the support of the top, it will be a lot slower and it won't have the leverage of the culture, of the voice of authority that culture operates on.

So, if there is going to be any change/improvement in the teaching practices and skill levels throughout the System, the change will have to start with the people 'at the top', according to the interviewees.

1B Nepotism

I observed that school staffs often included members of senior staff's families. To some extent, this is unavoidable because of the small population and the very small number of people available for the work. The same applies for positions of promotions. The phi-sort result placed nepotism in the medium significant group and, possibly because of its perceived inevitability, received little attention during interviews.

[U] Staffing is more on seniority, on years of service, on family connections and such issues. It's not actually about this is a really good teacher – how do I nurture them; where do I put them where we get the most of them and where they can be the best influence on others.

[R] They become faifekau because they're the son of whoever – it's a pretty suspect criteria. It's a social status, it's a culture.

1C Number of Faifekau

About sixty teachers in the System (i.e. more than one in six) are also faifekau (ordained ministers); most principals are faifekau. An outsider might assume that having ministers of the church on a school staff would have a beneficial effect on the school, especially if the school takes seriously the System's stated vision and mission. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

Faifekau have higher status in Tonga than do teachers and they are able to command higher incomes. There can be confusion about faifekau's priorities; outside activities can take precedence over school activity. As a result, faifekau are likely to be absent from their teaching roles to attend funerals or public events. When this happens, classes are usually left without a teacher. Frequently, a faifekau appears to be looking for an opportunity to become a parish minister with the higher status. Thus, he (or she) is just marking time in the school.

During a conversation I had with an education leader outside the interview situation, he explained his attitude to this confusion of roles by quoting a poem of Queen Salote: *"He 'oku Tupunga pe 'etau fa'a he, Koe fehopokaki he siakale kehe"* ('The cause of our problems is not staying in the right place').

Perhaps surprisingly, there is not universal agreement that faifekau add a more Christian element to a school.

Faifekau as models.

[M] They can benefit the school in a very small way. But does affect the school because of the stationing process; faifekau training cripples the staffing of the school; no suitable replacements; they have two posts at one time – will leave teaching and go and do that other thing; first priority is the faifekau (role)*; adds to stress for deputy and principal; I would like fewer faifekau. Are they good examples? - they are*

not!, most of them are very slack; they think they are all good and no-one will speak to them and tell them off and they can do as they want; we (senior staff) *cannot tell them because we are lower down in that hierarchy; in theory it would be good but in reality that is not the case.*

[J] To me if they do their jobs, their teaching, a faifekau has more responsibilities, more expectations of the faifekau; they should be a model for the rest of the staff. They can work closely with principals, deputies, tutors; they can contribute to the school. (There are problems at one particular school with many faifekau) – *Yes. Very sad. That's why I was thinking if there are many faifekau we expect a school to be better because they are there. But they are not.*

[D] Students act differently depending on teachers' status in the church, especially faifekau.

[R] Maybe they had so many faifekau, they didn't have positions of authority to put them in so they created another position; that is probably the reason (there are so many faifekau) *more than good education practice.*

[W] As the number of faifekau has risen, the quality has plummeted. They're a bad influence because they are not committed. They're certainly not leading children to Christ.

Clearly, the interviewees do not see faifekau as good role models, either for students or for their colleagues. The school leaders generally believe that having fewer faifekau as teachers could improve the quality of teaching. The appointment of faifekau is a matter over which the senior officers of the FWCT and of the Education System have almost total control.

1D 'Parapet Effect'

As a consultant working with teachers, it was frustrating often for me trying to come to terms with their reluctance to voice opinions or to suggest ideas. Teachers, leaders even, are not accustomed to voicing their own ideas, at least in the presence of someone more senior. It was regarded as 'showing off' to differ with more senior people or just being visible. They were uncomfortable with 'putting their heads above the parapet' even among colleagues – it was safer to stay quiet, receive instructions and do as little as possible to be noticed. I observed that this was the case even among education officers – they could be reluctant to speak at a meeting, for example, until the senior person departed.

The culture of silence.

[R] Jesus said you are really good at keeping laws but that's not what being a follower of His is about. But I feel our system is really constrained by all the conformity and control and anyone who tried to put their head above the parapet gets slapped down very quickly to keep quiet.

I believe that this is the case throughout the System. One interviewee, however, saw the situation slightly differently.

[J] It depends how you feel but from my part there is a time I expect that you (subordinate*) won't agree with me (*superordinate*) all the time and you can say whatever you feel. It will help on my part to improve. If I look at it and it's true it's a help to me and the whole school. It's not disrespectful. It would be very helpful. It's good to know what your job is, I think that's the most important thing.*

Most interviewees recognised the existence of the parapet effect and saw it negatively.

[F] (Having a different opinion) *That's an important part of education these days – being given some degree of freedom to express your thinking, your beliefs. The whole process of thinking is there, they have their opinions in the brain but I think that's what happens with our culture, the culture of silence. I think it may take longer than expected for that to change.*

[H] We have a hierarchical system and only certain people talk. In our classrooms it is very difficult to do. Even adults. It's difficult to get adults to share opinions. That will have an impact on students learning as well because teachers are not encouraging participation in their learning, they will sit there and not talk.

[G] The students in class will be silent. It's very hard to do the opinion because of their culture. They don't like to interrupt. It's not easy in the classroom so, what I'm doing now is I'm trying to encourage them, they have to make an opinion, they have to see what they are thinking about. Sometimes I ask and they shrug their shoulders because of the culture. This is a very hard thing for us to do, sometimes hard to bring their opinion. And the teachers, too. The culture is not good. Is not working with the education. It's strong there. Culture can get in the way of a good education.

Culture can get in the way of a good education! It is not necessarily so, however. The fact that several interviewees felt confident enough to voice concerns about the 'silence' issue suggests that at least one aspect of the Tongan culture can be changed if Spillane & Diamond's 'followers' (2007, pp. 8-9) decide to contribute to defining leadership practice.

[T] Teachers should be able to share and not be afraid of the parapet. They share other things – goods, food, money – but when it comes to your thinking, sharing ideas with colleagues, teachers will feel the hierarchy. They want to be spoon-fed.

Effect on enthusiasm.

It was heartening to discover an occasional teacher, invariably young, who was prepared to suggest and demonstrate innovative classroom teaching practice. When teachers have just finished initial training or perhaps a short, in-service course, characteristically they are full of enthusiasm and ideas. Unfortunately, as they join an established staff, they feel the pressure to conform.

> *[T] It's very hard for that teacher to survive or to keep going. In their own little group, yes, they can support each other, but interest the whole group? It's very difficult. When you are in a school you are surrounded by Tongan culture and the culture of the institution.*

> *[V] It's just safer and easier to just merge back into the current practice.*

The interviewees appear to identify with Chadwick and Valenzuela's (2006) characterisation about the traditional cultures' attitude to innovation – i.e. suspicious and slow to adapt (2007). The fact that some school leaders are aware of the situation regarding the need to nurture motivated teachers is promising … so long as someone provides the needed leadership and opportunities.

1F Ageism

This aspect of culture was not highly rated during the phi-sort and received little attention during the interviews. Perhaps ageism is masked by faka'apa'apa (respect), a 'core value'.

> *[D] Junior teachers respect senior teachers.*

[L] In school it doesn't make any difference. The older ones and the young ones - it's the same thing.

1G Fatalism

During the phi-sort activity, participants gave fatalism the lowest ranking of aspects of Tongan culture affecting change in classroom practice. During interviews, there were starkly differing views.

No such thing!

When asked if they saw fatalism in the culture, two interviewees simply said:

[B] NO!

[C] NO!

A slightly different view.

Others were less adamant.

[D] It's something to do with the faith … always leave everything to God. We can't do anything.

[M] Fatalism part of Tongan culture? No, I don't see that. It's an individual choice. I can say that it is much more to Western religious faith than the Tongan. If it's like a position given to you from above you're saying that you can't do anything about it because they said so, but if it's from you I don't think it's cultural, it's your own choice . If you are there in the classroom that thing might have happened in the past but nowadays people have access to education and they have been taught they have the right to work, the right to say that, the right to speak, children's rights,

women's rights, all those things. As this generation, we are influenced by those educational concepts.

[F] I see fatalism in our culture – that's exactly what I'm trying to say. You can easily dissolve into a state of acceptance. I'll give you a good example. The staff here say to the students 'You can come to see us at any time' (to discuss their studies). *If we're lucky we'll have two or three of them show up and talk to us about problems they have. They have total acceptance of the situation and don't see that they can do anything about it and that's exactly what I'm trying to say.*

[C] They (teachers) *are adults so they should be responsible. They shouldn't have to wait for everything from me.*

[H] I wouldn't put it as fatalism. I would say that it's Tongan's idea of obedience. We are not encouraged … to go against those in authority. I would say quite a few (Tongans) *feel powerless.*

My own view is that fatalism is one of the defining aspects of Tongan culture and has a huge impact on any move for change. It appears to be what influences principals to do little until they receive leadership from head office; it appears to be what deters teachers from trying to improve their teaching skills unless a more senior person tells them exactly what is required of them. Initiative is positively frowned upon quite often, perhaps because it can be threatening to the existing order.

How far fatalism is distanced from laziness or *fakafiefiemalie* is not clear but acceptance of things as they are, or the conviction that everything is in the hands of other people or of God, seems to be thoroughly embedded in the Tongan psyche.

1H Leadership

As noted above (regarding my first visit), it was the practice for education officers to 'inspect' schools rather than offer Western-style leadership and guidance. During my visit two years later, I observed that the emphasis was changing and that officers were playing a bigger role in professional development. That change continued during following years.

Visibility.

Some leaders, especially school-based leaders, were not satisfied however

[J] We need some actions; talking is not enough.

[B] Sometimes they (education officers) *appear and sometimes they disappear; it may be good to have them get more familiar with teachers; they are too removed.*

I spent a good deal of time helping principals and other leaders learn about the frequently-used approach in Western schools of 'Management by Walking Around' (MBWA). In the case of head office personnel, it could be 'Management by *Driving* Around'! The purpose is simply for senior people to become more informed about what is happening in schools or classrooms and, mainly by their presence, influence events and practices. Visits should be frequent, usually unannounced, informal and not disruptive. A few leaders were starting to use the approach during the 2013 visit. One principal, for instance, by being in the school playground at the right time, was surprised to see that a lesson changeover could take 20 minutes – he was in a position to be able to act on this observation, immediately. An education officer was able to take appropriate action after she observed that a teacher was missing from his classroom and, further, to comment after she saw another teacher using good classroom practice. On another occasion, I arrived, unannounced, at a

small, four-teacher school and learned that the principal was away sick, another teacher was missing, a third teacher was working with a class and the fourth teacher was fast asleep on his desk. When this situation was reported to head office (where no-one was aware of what had been happening), action was taken quickly. More frequent, unannounced, visits by senior officers might have prevented the situation from reaching this level.

> *[J] If teachers need help, the school management team should give it. If that doesn't work, then the office should give it and then outsiders.*

> *[W] They got a degree in a subject 30 years ago and now they are a leader in education; they've never read anything at all about education; they're not visionary at all about where they are going to take the schools in education; it's more of a nuts and bolts everyday-running type of leadership.*

Tongan education 'leaders' seldom provide *leadership.* They *manage* current organisational arrangements and ways of doing business. Leadership involves transforming existing ways, upsetting business as usual in schools and classrooms (Spillane and Diamond, 2007, p. 4). Interviewee *[W]* indicates an awareness of this difference quite clearly in the above response.

Some changes.

In the original review and strategic plan, there was mention of the fact that, at head office level, the role of each education officer was not at all clear. This had changed to a great extent three years later and the change increased the likelihood of more efficient and effective leadership and administration.

> *[F] I think there will be changes because we're getting strong leaders coming through now and they are a lot more free to express themselves.*

[C] If teachers are not performing, they should be fired. The office is not good at that. I would do it if I had the authority.

The issue of firing as well as hiring is a difficult one for many people in management positions. As a result, a number of less-than-competent relatives and long-term acquaintances remain employed beyond the time when they have demonstrated their inadequacies. That opinion is shared by several interviewees.

[K] I would like to see team leadership, leadership as a team. Also that people really know what they need to know to do their job. Things like a job description, job specifications need to be clear.

[M] We are all learning. We are doing some professional development with the principals' upskilling program; we are learning to coach teachers and are recording evidence.

The 'upskilling program' referred to, mentioned in Chapter 3, Part A – Fourth visit of this paper, is one started in 2012 and driven by overseas consultants. Its impact, after those consultants have withdrawn, cannot be assumed.

The RPEI project, described in more detail in the Tongan research section of Chapter 3, Part A listed five areas for local research projects; they included administration and leadership, an area which attracted almost no interest. Fua (2006) asserted that "A key question being asked here relates to the division of tasks, and organisational planning and change" (p.6). No Tongan educator involved in this project took up the challenge to research this matter, however. Fua pondered that perhaps the connection between leadership/management and teaching/learning is not always clear, even to the *leaders* in Tongan education.

1J Accountability

Accountability is related to fatalism in that, if something is determined by a principal, education officer, the head of the church or, indeed, God, then teachers may feel unable to do anything about it and they just accept the situation.

Accountability is not Tongan.

[F] If it's God's will then you don't feel accountable to anybody. In fact you don't even feel accountable to yourself for not questioning or for not making an attempt to know what you should know.

Time for a change.

Not all interviewees were prepared to just shrug off the notion of accountability as being too difficult to change.

[C] I am wishing for the teachers to take their own responsibilities; they are adult people; they should be responsible; they shouldn't wait for everything from leaders.

[H] We really should have something in the System imported from a modern system which holds teachers accountable Accountability is where teachers are doing their planning, where teachers are in the classroom, where there is evidence that students are learning or not. It's not just in the classroom; it's also in the school level, in the management level and in the overall education system. I think we should start with the principals.

[H] At the moment we have no clear understanding, no documentation of what a person's role should be and therefore we have all these problems and confusions as

to who needs to do what. So, how can we assess someone if we don't know what they're supposed to do? It really concerns me that we allow a lot of people to be operating, affecting our children's learning.

Accountability includes the matters raised above by *[C]* and *[H]*; it is unlikely to be present without clearly stated roles and suitable record-keeping. Now, will those interviewees and others be prepared to 'raise their heads above the parapet'?

Ex-students (including those now living overseas) and their organisations play a large role in the FWCT schools, especially with direct financial help. They also help on working bees, building projects, and fund-raising activities and by awarding scholarships for students whose parents find it difficult to pay school fees.

[L] Ex-students give encouragement to the school with money; it should be checked and audited, but it depends on how the principal and administrators take it and how they cope with the independent body. They (the ex-students) *could interfere.*

[E] If you have been trained or can get some training or professional development, you should do it; make the most of it. That's being accountable.

The implicit logic of focussing on professional development as a means for improving student achievement is that high quality professional development will produce superior teaching in classrooms, which will, in turn, translate into higher levels of student achievement. (Supovitz as cited in Meiers, 2007, p. 409).

[D] Accountability is very important. You have to explain why you do things or not do things. To me that should be important to everyone.

[J] The teachers should be accountable for the performance of the students. If the students are not doing well I expect the teachers to do better, and the principals and deputies. It's no use blaming the students.

The parapet effect ('don't stand out') and fatalism ('the world' causes things to happen) are likely to get in the way of accountability. So, too, is the Tongan view of looking after the interests of one's family and clan.

It was interesting to note that some interviewees, such as *[J]*, focussed on the teaching/learning aspects of accountability rather than on the financial implications.

Traditional and Modern Cultures

Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) listed 23 cultural factors, shown in Table 10, and identified some of the key differences between traditional culture and what they call modern culture. They describe the two cultures as 'progress resistant' and 'progress prone', respectively.

Tongan culture can be said to be traditional but is caught currently somewhere between the two types; the result is a measure of tension as the Tongan people attempt to become more like Westerners while trying to maintain the key aspects of their own culture. Already, the current Tongan culture is something of a mosaic, given the changes that have been brought about since the arrival of the missionaries in the early nineteenth century (such as Christianity, corporal punishment, rugby, brass bands, Westminster-style rituals, schools, English language, technology).

Table 10
Principal cultural variables and their manifestations traditional *Tongan and World View*

FACTOR	**TRADITIONAL TONGAN CULTURE** (Progress resistant)	**"MODERN" WORLD VIEW CULTURE** (Progress prone)
	TOGAN VIEW	***WORLD VIEW***
1.Religion	Is focussed on the other world and life after death; foments irrationality and inhibits material pursuits	Fosters rationality and achievement; promotes material pursuits; focus on this world; pragmatism
2.Destiny	Fatalism, resignation, 'que sera, sera'	One can influence destiny for the better
3.Time orientation	Present or past focus discourages planning, punctuality, savings (spontaneous planning)	Future focus promotes planning, punctuality, deferred gratification
4.Wealth	It is what exists (not expandable) where it exists (haves v have-nots)	It is a product of human creativity, expandable (positive sum)
5.Knowledge	Abstract, theoretical, cosmological, not verifiable, very often mystical	Practical, verifiable; facts matter
	TOGAN VALUES, VIRTUE	***WORLD VIEW VALUES, VIRTUE***
6.Attribution of control	Primarily external, "the world" causes things to happen	Primarily internal, each person is responsible for what he does
7.Ethical code	Elastic, wide gap between utopian norms and behaviour, much mistrust	Rigorous within realistic norms, foments trust
8.The "Lesser Virtues"	Lesser virtues are often unimportant	A job well done, tidiness, courtesy, punctuality matters
9.Education	Low priority; promotes dependency, orthodoxy, often is not seen as useful	Indispensable, promotes autonomy, heterodoxy, dissent, creativity
	TOGAN ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR	***WORLD VIEW ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR***
10.Work and achievement	Work to live; work does not lead to wealth; work is for the poor, is not respected, form of punishment	Live to work; work leads to improvement and wealth, is noble
11.Frugality	Threat to equality because those who save will get rich, provoking envy and rejection/disapproval	The mother of investment and creativity
12.Initiative, engagement, entrepreneurship	Income derives from connections, particularly government and family	Income derives from investment and creativity
13.Risk propensity	Low	Moderate
14.Competition	Is a sign of aggression and a threat to equality and privilege	Leads to higher equality, even excellence
15. Innovation	Suspicious; slow adaptation of innovation	Open; rapid adaption of innovation
16. Promotion and advancement	Based on family and patron connections	Based primarily on merit and effort

	TOGAN SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	*WORLD VIEW SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR*
17. Rule of law/corruption	Money, connections matter, corruption is tolerated	Reasonably law-abiding; corruption is prosecuted
18. Family and trust	The family is a fortress against the broader society, only thing to be trusted	The idea of family and trust extends to the broader society
19. Association (social capital)	Mistrust breeds extreme individualisation; social instability, lawlessness	Trust, identification breed cooperation, affiliation, participation
20. Authority	Centralised; unfettered, often arbitrary	Dispersed; checks and balances, transparency
21. Church-state relations	Religion plays a major role in civic sphere	Secularised; church and state are separate
22. Gender relations	Women subordinated to men in most dimensions of life	Gender equality is consistent with value system
23. Fertility	Children are the gifts of God, and they are an economic asset. Number of children is inverse to the family's economic capacity and education	Number of children depends on family's capacity to raise and educate them

The identification of the cultural differences in this portrayal might be somewhat simplistic in the Tongan situation because, for example:

- some Westerners feel powerless and some Tongans feel powerful;
- where Westerners might see 'nepotism', Tongans see looking after the family/clan in an acceptable manner;
- where Westerners might see "corruption", Tongans see the legitimate use of status. Campbell pointed out that "what foreigners call corruption is merely a misreading of the traditional Tongan web of obligations and exchange" (2001, p. 241);
- where Westerners see lively debate, Tongans see 'showing off'; and
- where Westerners see 'muzzling of debate' Tongans see a display of respect.

Nevertheless, the chart is useful in that, by pointing out the 'ideal cases', the writers indicated dramatically the gap between the two types of culture and implied the difficulties involved for a group of people in one culture attempting to become more similar to another.

So, in the situation where Tongan education leaders might wish to 'improve' an aspect of their education system (that is, in the given context, become more Western), there is a significant gap to be crossed in several factors listed, including 'destiny', 'attribution of control', 'authority', 'promotion and advancement', 'innovation' and even 'the lesser virtues'.

Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) wrote about the differences in the perception of time in the two types of culture. They said that people in traditional cultures reject the 'tyranny of time' and believe that 'what can be done today can be done tomorrow'. This sounds very similar to my own observations in Tonga, but, apart from a general appearance of laziness (or *fakafiefiemalie*) how might such a perception affect changes in education practice? The writers continued:

> The time orientation bears directly on planning. Many countries have weak planning abilities because their time perception makes thinking about the future rather difficult. … Plans prepared under these circumstances ('spontaneous planning') have little chance of being successful while plans prepared by outside technical assistance without serious local involvement have *no* probability of success (Chadwick & Valenzuela, 2006, p. 12).

Leadership and change agents

This latter point is supported by the experience of the leadership training project mentioned earlier in this treatise (Chapter 3, Part A – Fourth visit). A year after it had started, there was little to show for all the time, effort, resources and expertise involved. The same could be said of my own early attempts during my first visit.

> Efforts should stimulate local participation in the planning and implementation in order to create some sense of ownership, commitment and trust. … Leadership is a vital issue throughout all change. Change agents must help to develop leadership to facilitate sustainability of changes, modifications and improvements. At the school level, the principal must learn to be an instructional leader, fully aware of the details and conditions of learning in his or her school" (Chadwick & Valenzuela, 2006, pp. 20-21).

The external attribution of control (see item #6 in Table 10) combined with a worldview of fatalism (item #2) does not lead toward change nor toward responsibility. If a person's life is believed to be all in God's hands, for instance, it would be blasphemous to challenge God's supremacy by modifying or taking control of one's own life. The same thing applies regarding any person in authority – don't question that person or "raise one's head above the parapet" (other phrases describing this phenomenon are "pull-him-down syndrome" and "tall poppy syndrome") by showing initiative (Chadwick &Valenzuela, 2006, p. 7).

Harber and Mncube (2012) pointed out that many schools in developing countries have both traditional and modern organisational, social, cultural, economic and behavioural characteristics coexisting side by side within them. The result can be that a school can seem like a modern, bureaucratic school, but that this might be something of a façade as the school functions quite differently in reality – for example, there might be "teacher absenteeism, lateness, un-professionalism, sexual misconduct and corruption" (Harber & Mncube, 2012; pp. 104-5).

2. Attitudes

2A Teachers' Attitudes

The attitude of teachers to their classroom performance was identified by the group of leaders during the phi-sort as the most important cultural aspect affecting their improvement and this priority was affirmed during interviews.

> *[A] I think the attitude of the teachers; that's the big thing*, said one.
>
> *Lack of commitment.*

Another interviewee asked: *[J] Why so important? Because this is what will make them work or not do the work.*

How is this related to culture? *[E] They take time off to go to a funeral, something big in our culture. Or they go to a rugby game.*

[C] At the beginning of the year they (teachers) *have the energy and they are good coming in on time, but later some of them start to slacken. If they have to go to the principal there might be an improvement.*

[L] About half of them (teachers) *are coming to school on time.*

As well as attitude, sometimes this lateness is related to access to public transport and to family responsibilities.

[J] Teachers' attitudes? That's one area that needs to be looked at closely, because once the attitude changes, to do what we are expected to do, like their attitude towards teaching, they should be committed to their job, because once the teachers have that good attitude, I believe there is no problem; when they have a positive attitude towards their jobs they will feel happy about their job and be willing and do their best for the students. And if they don't, no matter how much we try to help them, if their attitude won't change they won't do what we expect them to.

Attitude towards teaching.

[D] I think the attitude of anybody, doing whatever they are, is important. They should think about what they are teaching – make an effort to work together with the students and not just reading the book. So, whether teachers are capable or incapable but their attitude of trying to help the students in some ways is lacking, I don't know whether it has to do with poor knowledge or if it's just the attitude.

‘Poor knowledge’ might be related to lack of professional development, initial training and mentorship.

[V] Teachers understand a lot about their own view of teaching but they need to turn the coin over and look at what their responsibility is for every learner and be able to show value adding for every learner as they move up through the system.

[D] The only thing left in the years to come is just to improve the attitude, the teachers’ attitude for their teaching for their job.

[T] As teachers, they are committed in their own way. A lot of them need professional development in terms of attitude.

Good leadership, good management, good modelling and good mentoring might also help teachers to change their attitudes.

Ways of improving attitudes.

One interviewee *[C]* suggested some ways for principals to help teachers to improve their attitude to their work:

I think that the best way to improve the attitude of the teachers is what I usually do – give them spiritual help;

After I did the New Zealand course (of teacher training) *I was transformed;*

Underperforming teachers should be given a second chance. The President of Education had a talk with two teachers with poor attitudes – the following year, one of them improved a lot but the other didn’t change. If they are still no good, then we ask them to find another place to work;

Some of the teachers are new to the job. If the principals and deputies can't help them, or if the principals give some help but see it's not working, then they should ask others, like in the head office.

Potential for attitude change through teacher training.

Sometimes, other aspects of Tongan culture can affect teachers' attitudes – *[B] Caring for children of rich or important parents but ignoring poor kids.*

The attitude of teachers and, indeed, of senior people, certainly can get in the way of good classroom practice. Among many educators, there appears to be an unwillingness to embrace, or even adopt, change. While it might be argued that 'attitudes' is not, itself, an aspect of culture, there are various aspects of Tongan culture which do impinge on attitudes - the social hierarchy, family and community responsibilities, peer pressure to conform, 'laidbackedness' and poverty are some of the relevant aspects which are considered elsewhere in this paper. Leaders may be unable to address attitudes directly but by addressing the impact of certain other issues, there may be a change of attitude among some teachers or a resolution of a conflict of attitudes.

[V] I think kindergarten teachers are doing really well ... because of the support … and knowing that there are (senior) *people who actually care about what they are doing. Primary schools? The new curriculum has given them a strong framework but it's a challenge to change the way they teach from the old chalk and talk. Secondary schools are still caught up in a time warp.*

[I] the biggest impact of change has been the training of teachers. We are shifting from the traditional way of teaching in kindergarten, the ways teachers teach….. Making that change is taking a bit longer time with some of them. There's

still some aspects of tradition that we're still trying to tackle (with training and guidance) *but that will come in time.*

[L] The teachers have a good attitude. That's why they mostly come to school on time.

[A] Teachers are doing good; they could do better!

[F] We have a sense that there is a need for teachers' skills to be developed; there is a wide understanding that no-one is fully prepared for being teachers. Here, we're seeing a lot more improvement – for the years I have been in this school I can honestly say I've seen improvement with teaching.

[D] There are some teachers just like the old saying 'waiting for the bus'; they are just waiting for another bus to turn up and they are thinking of some other jobs.

[S] Every child learns differently but because the way of teaching here in Tonga seems to be one way (passive students, 'chalk and talk'). *I don't think teachers are trained appropriately.*

[T] A lot of teachers need to go through professional development in terms of attitudes. … They need to get down to basics- do their planning, attend classes. If they don't, then let us (senior staff) *know so we can see what we can do.*

There is little doubt that Tongan teachers would benefit from a good deal of professional development, but it cannot be the same professional development that pertains in Western school systems. The following model (Figure 25), adapted from Watkins and Biggs (1996), suggested a more useful process than simply transferring a Western approach to a more traditional situation.

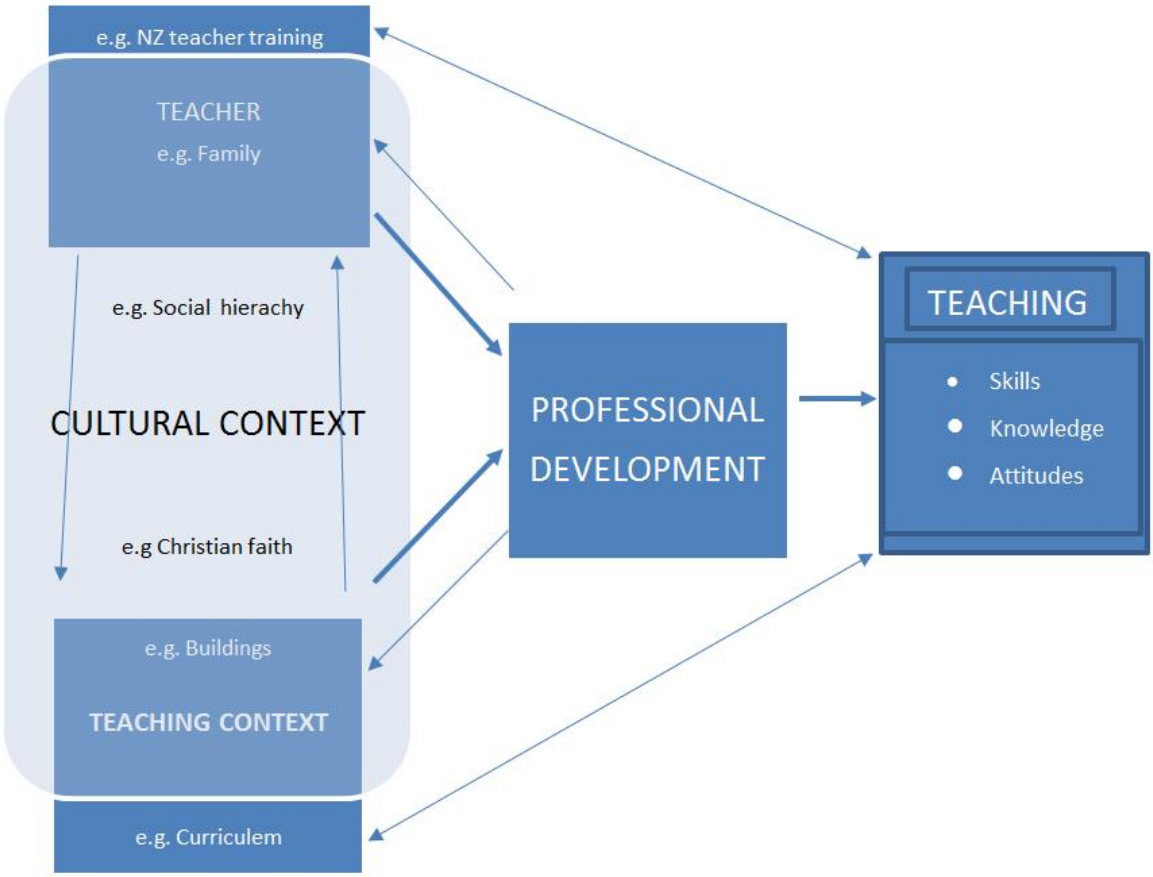


Figure 31 Designing professional development

This model suggests that, in order to have effective professional development which results in desirable teaching skills and knowledge as well as attitudes, there is the local cultural context to be considered. The training might include courses designed and delivered by palangis and the curriculum to be delivered might have a good many non-Tongan elements, but that is only part of the picture. Each teacher, for example, has particular cultural demands on him/her and the context in which the teaching is to take place has cultural overtones. Less obvious at first glance, perhaps, are the wider cultural aspects – the hierarchy within Tongan society and the Christian beliefs of teachers being two examples. If there is to be effective professional development, it needs to be well-designed and provided over time,

mainly with Tongan input; ‘parachuting in’ outside experts for short visits is not likely to be a satisfactory answer in the long run.

And one more thought …

[D] He is always late to school because that particular person he is sleeping, always comes late. Also on Mondays he chats to people instead of starting work. Still untrained; still single.

2B Parents’ Attitudes to Education

Perhaps more accurately, this aspect could be described as ‘What educators believe are parents’ attitudes to education’.

Interviewees described a range of situations related to parental attitudes to education which could be observed in most societies. There are, however, the peculiarities of attitude and behaviour which are typically Tongan.

Lack of commitment to education.

[O] Most of the students’ problems with schools come from problem families and it’s very sad. Good families are no problem…. What causes the problems is a cause for concern, the culture is the problem.

[B] If parents are well educated, they will have a good attitude to education, whatever level they are and wherever they are. If they don’t have a good attitude to education they don’t see it as important.

[L] There is a lot of things okay in the family but they let their kids not come to school. For example, this week there was one student came in the morning and said

can I leave from school today and I said why, and she said I am looking after the kids at home, there is no one (parent) *at home. I said where is your mother - she's going to town; where's your father - he's going to the bush to do some work there. Nobody is at home.*

[O] Some of the parents let the students stay away if there is a funeral in the village, they will not come to school but stay at home with the little kids and the parents will go to the funeral; sometimes for one day, two days.

[L] And also, when they are unhealthy they are absent from the school for more than two days; it's dependent on the parents.

Parents' lack of schooling.

Some interviewees were at pains to explain the attitudes of parents:

[L] For example if that parent is a good learner they will push their kids to come to school but if the parents were finished their own schooling in form 1 or 2 (first two years of secondary schooling) *and got married and had children they discipline their children according to their mentality* (beliefs) *– it is not in their heart, their school; but if the parent is a good educator they will push their children to go to school.*

[B] Parents don't understand about play (in kindergartens) *because they didn't go to kindergarten themselves. Parents often do the children's homework for them.*

[S] It's what the parents experienced as children and what <u>their</u> parents experienced. … The biggest way that I see us solving a lot of our problems is parent

education and raising community awareness on things like child development and behaviour management. … Everything is slow.

Attitudes are hereditary, it seems. When it comes to changing attitudes, as *[S]* observed, everything is slow.

Not all comments were negative.

[L] Parents can be very supportive, in the classroom and out of the classroom. The PTA - they donated some money to help run the school; if you want to buy a chart or something, there is a lot of money for it.

2C Church Expectations and Religious Beliefs

The phi-sort differentiated between these two aspects – one was ranked 4 and the other 14 – but, during interviews, there appeared to be much crossover. So, here they are treated together.

The System's statements regarding its mission and vision are spelled out clearly and teachers are made aware of them. As recounted earlier (Chapter 4, Part A), the participants in the first stage of data collection explained these to me and they appear in the strategic plan.

MISSION: To teach and prepare students in all aspects of life (spiritual, physical and intellectual development) according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

VISION: All young people who belong to FWCT families will receive an education from the church's education system and that this will prepare them for life as contributing members of the Tongan community and with the attributes of practising Christians. (Samate and Phelps, 2009a, p. 2)

These statements, if taken seriously, should have a significant impact on the way educators go about their work. Not everybody is convinced that the statements, especially the phrase about 'the teachings of Jesus Christ', have the desired impact, however. Expressed faith, it seems, does not always equate with performance.

[K] I wonder whether all teachers understand the vision and the mission. We talk about it and it's written, but when it's applied to the individual lives of the teachers, well, there's a question mark over that. Effect of being a Christian teacher? Our teaching is Christ-centred. To me, we have it within ourselves, in our hearts, in everything we understand. It's our job and we are working in the system where there's a mission and there's a vision. We have goals and expectations and standards too.

[T] When it comes to work, you should be expressing your personal faith in terms of your performance and your behaviour and your conduct, your attitude – some teachers look at it as a totally different thing, foreign from themselves.

[N] We tell students about changes and values – cultural values, Christian values; we try to ensure these values will drive them to arrive at the platform that is expected of them. Some (Tongan cultural) *aspects can hinder that if you let it happen.*

[F] Tongans go to church – if they understand why, what they are praying for, its actually to live your Monday to Saturday, not just Sunday; it's how you relate with your staff and your students. You go to church and that's got to help you in your week to do your work to the best of your ability. Our faith comes alive or has meaning when we have our work and apply it; I think Tongan culture has lined up with Christian

characteristics. So, take the good things of the Tongan culture as long as we line them up with God's work.

[U] As far as I can see Wesleyan religion is far more Pharisee than Jesus.

Presumably, this interviewee is talking about hypocrisy.

[Q] They put pressure on their families (overseas) *to send back their misonali* (annual donation to church) *at the last minute. They don't see it as their responsibility in life to put a little aside for God each week, to be thankful …; it doesn't need to be much but it should be an on-going thing, instead of a last-minute thing in ringing auntie or the son and saying send us some money for misonali.*

[T] Most of us think faith is you go to church, you do what the church expects of you. They make their donation. That's a good church person. I think they've misinterpreted Christian faith. Christian faith is more than that.

Christian faith certainly ought to be more than church attendance and I agree with the interviewees who see a gap between professed faith and what actually happens in a classroom.

[I] early childhood education is slowly being recognised as important. The church has acknowledged a real need for it but they are falling a bit short in the support of it. Not just money. Showing an interest, bring the children to school, respect for the teachers. Our churches are not utilising the service and seeing the importance of it

The emergence of early childhood education is one of the positive facets of the System's operations which I have observed. It would be disappointing if the church's perceived ambivalence resulted in a reduction of this development.

> *[H] We can choose to have the Tongan culture but if we claim to be Christians … we should be teaching students according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as it says in our vision. We should be discussing and saying 'how can we best change that culture into this?'*
>
> *[T] In Tonga, Christianity is 'a mile wide and an inch deep.'*

I had heard this last statement said of Tonga before I went there. It was somewhat saddening to hear the sentiment expressed so adamantly by an informed and influential local Christian educator.

3. Dependence

3A Increasing Use of Technology

Most Tongans, especially those living on Tongatapu, have considerable access to television. Programs are produced in Tonga or overseas; they may be in either English or the Tongan language. Mobile phones and other technological devices are very common. Increasingly common in the general population and in schools is computer access. As in other parts of the world, young people tend to be more at ease with the technology than are their parents and teachers.

The System's tertiary institute now has a course in which computer technicians may be trained. Schools have computers but many of them are second-hand donations from overseas and have a limited future.

[F]Over time we will have access to technology. The young are enjoying the technology- they are expressing themselves freely among themselves. I think things in school will change; as the students change, teachers will change – they will have to. Teachers will start to see students expecting more from us, and also the leaders will be expecting more from us.

[G] They see television and mobile phones

[L] We are lucky here; The children are looking and looking at TV and movies and pick up English. We are teaching in English; they understand what we are speaking but when I ask for someone to answer, it is very hard for them to answer in English.

[U] A lot of the rhetoric is driven by the idea that if we get lots of technology, everything will be just perfect and you and I know that's not true.

Apart from any other issues, the technical and financial matters involved in providing sustainable and satisfactory technology provisions in the schools are/will be considerable. Some of the 'other issues' are maintenance, skilled operators, sufficient training for teachers and technicians and a concern about languages. .

3B Dependence on Outsiders

The dependence on outsiders can take several forms, but it is most obvious when it comes to money. The diaspora (in number probably the equivalent of those remaining at home) has resulted in Tongans living in Australia, New Zealand, USA and elsewhere being seen as wealthy by those continuing to live in Tonga. This perception results in an expectation of remittances; those 'wealthy' emigrants are expected to send money to their

family and friends at home. Remittances have been a strongly felt responsibility in the past but that situation might tend to weaken as later generations feel less attached to their homeland.

Ex-students, wherever they are living, are often called upon to help with major school projects (such as the construction of a new building), either with money or with skills and time. The ex-students are also expected to be generous with scholarships to enable poorer families to send their children to fee-charging schools such as those run by the FWCT.

Perhaps dependence is not far removed from fatalism; there will always be money available from another source.

> *[J] They can help them. Just like families, if only one person working, and they need more money for fees their family can help. Maybe the family from overseas. If they are too dependent on that it will be a burden for those people overseas trying to send money. And yet again the people here seem to be lazy, to just live and depend on people rather than try to help themselves.*

> *[E] The aid from New Zealand or Australia I think is very useful for materials, teaching aids, maintenance, computer, extra things.*

> *[M] Ex-students. They really contribute to a large extent to the development of the wellbeing of the school including money.*

> *[E] I think the school can run very well because of the aid from Australia and New Zealand.*

> *[Q]* (If we are to get our own university) *I think the input from overseas would be the first priority… But it shows that we are thinking of change.*

[L] There are some people who will offer, the people they have been here before, ex-students, and they are going overseas and we are communicating with them – but I don't know when they will send the money, so I'm going to ask the church to build a fence around the school to keep out the pigs.

3C 'Palangi is best'

The balance between keeping and valuing Tongan culture on one hand and adopting what is good about the world of the palangi is a source of tension for many of the interviewees.

[F] How do you change somebody if they have never seen anything else? I think that would be a challenge that could stop us.

[B] I think it's like the palangi now (i.e. children having more to say)*; old system of 'discipline' holding back education.*

[O] I think Western education is perfect but for us Tongans there are differences. We have to trust ourselves … to be selective, accept only things you are compatible with, not everything. But for education purposes, everything is okay.

[U] Palangis have a lot to answer for. It's the attitudes and structures and policies and expectations that were set up by those early missionaries. To what extent are these (petty) *rules really Christian?*

The early missionaries and palangi educators really did try to emulate their own backgrounds as they established schools and colleges in Tonga during the nineteenth century. For some current Tongan educators, it is that past ethos which continues to be seen as the

benchmark to be admired and practised today. Others, such as *[U]*, clearly have a different view and have an understanding of the difficulties which lie ahead.

> The near-hegemonic, bureaucratic model of formal, western-style … schooling defines and constitutes 'education' for development in the twenty first century – as inscribed in the UN's Millennium Development Goals. … The true extent to which schools in developing countries can actually perform this role of modernising bureaucratic socialisation is open to some question. (Harber & Mncube, 2012, pp. 20-21).

> *[T] A lot of Tongans want to be like palangis … because they think everything a palangi brings is the best – we look up to palangis for education, Christian faith, money. So we can easily lose our Tonganness. .. But Tongans know what preserves the culture and make them what they are. … Proud of a culture that still remains . They always want to come back here to die.*

Tongans are not alone among peoples in a diaspora in wanting to 'return home'. The Welsh use the word '*hiraeth*' to describe the same longing; for many years, Jews declared "next year in Jerusalem".

> *3D Westernisation*

> *[J] We are becoming more Westernised; it's a good thing, it's not worse. We won't reach where we need to be otherwise - not in terms of resources qualifications, student achievement. I think we benefit a lot* (from Westernisation) *and we have the networks now and communications and the technology. There is much improvement in education because of our relationship, how we work and communicate with other counties overseas.*

[F] We should always be a little bit dissatisfied; there will always be a better way of doing things. I don't know how you tie our attitudes (to change) *to culture but then again how do you change someone if they have never seen anything else? I think that would be the challenge that could stop us. Improvements? For us Tongans I think it becomes apparent that things are changing; I think it's a positive thing. For example, there are discussions going on* (in parliament, in schools, on the radio, in the community) *about physical abuse of children – there is movement.*

[F] In five or six years from now, the students who come here should feel the same quality of services here as in New Zealand or Australia and that would be normal. In a Western environment you take things for granted; you tend to forget the machinery that happens out of sight but keeps things moving - it's just what it's supposed to be! I'd like us to feel there will always be another step up so you don't become too complacent. I think the idea that we have affiliations with institutions and schools in New Zealand and Australia is good.

[K] I'm not saying Western culture is a problem; it does help in a way and it does hinder in a way - two things are happening at the same time; students are being influenced by Western ways in their lifestyle, the way they act, their behaviour, their mindset, even the way they speak, approach things, everything is influenced. They are somewhere in the middle. I can say they are confused. Because when they come to school they are told to do this but when they go home the cultural values are stronger in the way they are being taught.

[N] (Going off to study elsewhere) *is a good thing. You have to be exposed to the whole world, experience the whole world, no matter if you like it or not or if it's*

different or not. But when you come back to Tonga, you have to be selective, accept the idea of changing, but not to a point where you break down things.

Many Tongans feel the tensions involved being somewhere between their old culture and the increasingly significant Western presence. Most interviewees appear to acknowledge the inevitability of change while remaining cautious about it.

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs play an important role in bringing about sustainable development in island nations in the Pacific. Not the least of these NGOs is UnitingWorld, the Australian organisation which enabled me, as a volunteer education consultant, to play a small part in changing the capacity of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System.

Low and Davenport (2002) saw two major current problems for NGOs in the Pacific. First, the need to ensure on-going financial viability for the organisation itself and, second, the challenge of embedding capacity in island organisations rather than in individuals. Low and Davenport asserted that what is "needed by NGOs is a rethinking of the standard funding cycle and the focus on 'exit strategies' and more attention to the innovative strategies rooted in Pacific culture and practice" (p. 378). In other words, if developments are to be sustainable, it is a good idea to look to the locals; outsiders do not have all the answers.

Coxon and Nabobo (2000) referred to 'a diarrhoea of consultants' when they critiqued the heavy presence of overseas aid personnel in the Solomon Islands. They might well have been writing about Tonga.

3E Sister-School Relationships

Several System schools have relationships with schools in Australia and New Zealand. This arrangement could have positive outcomes for schools on both sides – students

and staff from all schools could visit and learn about another culture; Tongan staff members (including librarians) could spend time with Western colleagues and experience the way the palangis make the most of their knowledge, skills and professional attitudes.

> *[G] There is a way out of the culture. We have a sister school in Australia. I took my students and the teacher and went there. We saw the difference in education and everything. It's very challenging for everyone; the other culture and the other skills. Different leadership, how the students were busy and learned. When we come back to Tonga, most of our students and the teacher brought all those ideas and skills and put them in here. For instance, I learned that the principal should be the first one at school each day and chase up the missing people. The students sit down with the palangi students and work like them. And the students and the teacher learn they must be at school on time. So, I can see the change is going very slowly but it is happening. It's a very positive relationship.*

In some cases, the relationship is one to be applauded but, unfortunately, it does not always work out ideally. Sometimes, there is a tendency for the Tongans to see the Western schools as another source of resources and this entrenches even further their dependency mind-set. Even the visits Tongans make to Sydney, for example, can become holidays with relatives rather than for more school-oriented purposes.

4. Way of Life

Individualism vs. Communitarianism

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) proposed a model of national cultural differences in a framework for cross-cultural communication. The model has seven

dimensions, one of which has particular relevance to this treatise: individualism compared with communitarianism.

The writers explained that in cultures favouring individualism, people believe in personal freedom and achievement. Those people believe that a person makes his/her own decisions and that one must take care of oneself. Communitarianism, on the other hand, is a form of culture in which people believe that the group is more important than the individual. The group provides help and safety in exchange for loyalty. The group always comes before the individual.

Typical 'individualism' countries include Australia and New Zealand. Typical 'communitarianism' countries include many of those in Latin America and Africa.

I would add Tonga to this second list. A phrase I heard several times in Tonga was "I belong; therefore I am".

Leadership and change agents

Hofstede (1980) developed a theoretical framework which analysed the relationships between Leadership and change agents and proposed a model, similar to that of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), of four dimensions, one of which was a dichotomy - Individualism/Collectivism. On one side of this division are societies in which the ties among individuals are loose and people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate families. On the other side are societies in which people, from birth, are integrated into strong, cohesive groups which protect them in exchange for loyalty.

The other dimensions in Hofstede's model (Figure 27) are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation and Masculinity/Femininity and the model may be portrayed as:

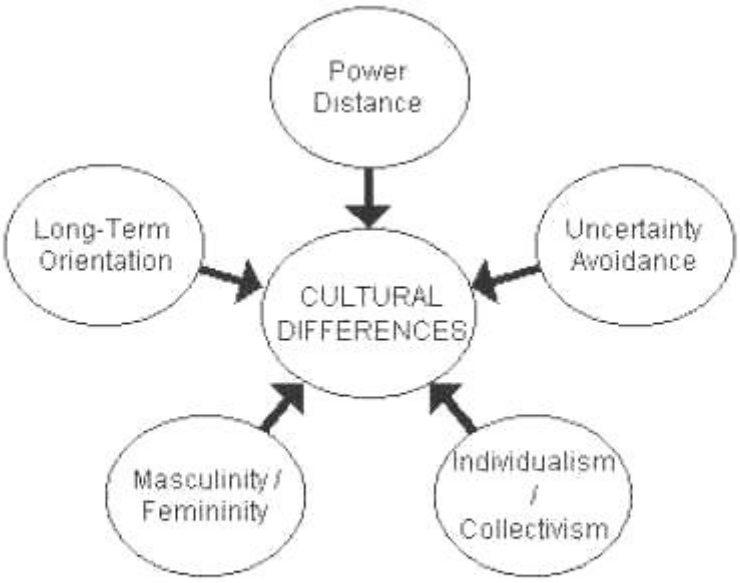


Figure 32 Hofstede's model of cultural beliefs and organisational action

Hofstede pointed out that many aspects of culture, iceberg-like, are largely out of sight (Figure 29). For example, the Tongan interviewees spoke of the ways in which teacher poverty or the number of teacher/faifekau on a school staff can affect teachers' classroom skills, as does respect for high rank; the effects of these aspects are not always apparent to an outsider.

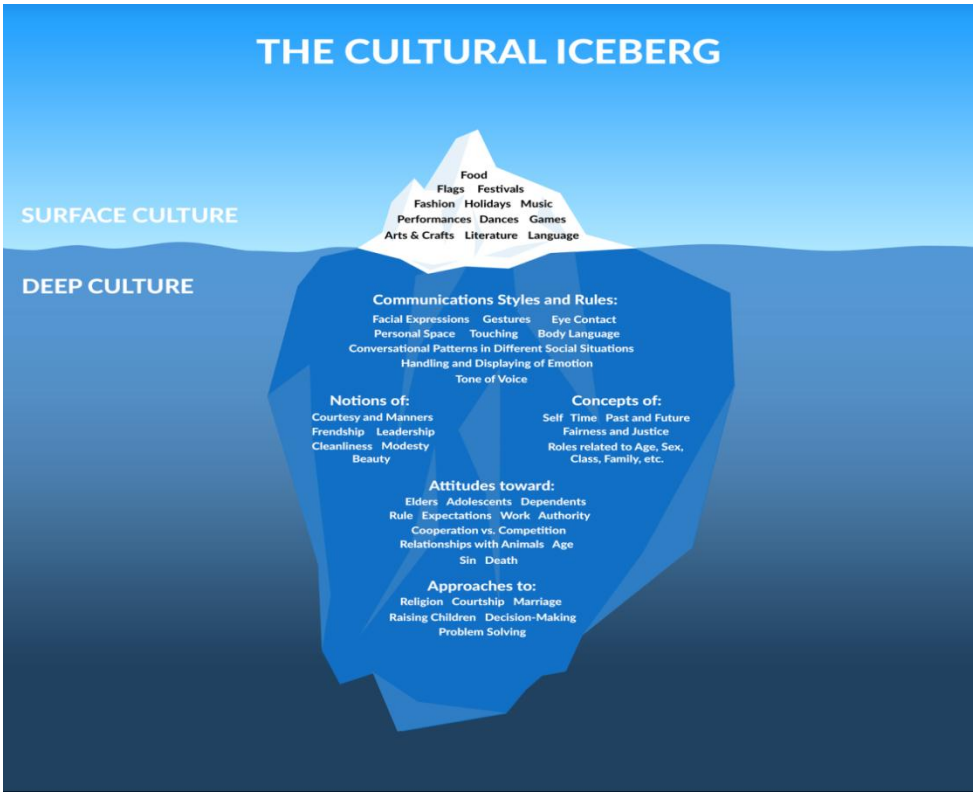


Figure 33 The cultural iceberg

Somewhat depressing, perhaps, is Hofstede's conclusion that "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster" (Retrieved from http:/www.geert-hofstede.com/)

4A Family and Community Responsibilities

"I belong; therefore I am!" *[T] I think that phrase says what it's like; it's crucial in a community. Because it's where you are and who you are and your relationships in the community. It affects teaching because when you ask them to plan, that's the last thing they want to do. They make all kinds of excuses – 'because we have a funeral', 'my brother just arrived' 'we have to do this feast for Sunday'. Every reason they can get to avoid.*

Belonging.

Family, extended family and community responsibilities are basic to Tongan culture and life. Sometimes these responsibilities can get in the way of professional life, including improvement in classroom practice.

> *[N] It is very difficult for teachers to get to school on time; most of them are mothers who still have children in school. They will have to do duties at home, working around the home in the morning and having to cook some lunch for their kids and with their husband also. Most of them are both working and I just think it's very hard to keep on time.*

In addition to these family commitments, there can be problems with actually travelling to school and other workplaces beyond walking distance. Most teachers do not have cars and they are dependent on family/friends or on public transport which is not always available or convenient.

> *[I] Moving teachers to a different school causes problems with transport. Our teachers are very poorly paid and they come from all over the place. They are very reliant on living with extended family or on getting a church house.*

> *[Q] Without the help of the community there would be no school … everything at this school would be based on what the community can offer. It can be either way – disadvantage or advantage.*

Confusion of roles can be a problem. For example, a teacher might be a relative of a pupil or a life-long friend of a pupil's parent. If there is a difficult circumstance to resolve, that teacher can be in something of a bind. The school role is likely to be secondary to the community/family role. A similar conflict may arise when a principal or education officer

needs to appoint a new staff member or dismiss a serving one. The country's population is, after all, a mere 100,000 people and the personal networks (and perceived social and familial responsibilities) are strong.

4B Low Income

Poorly paid.

Several interviewees saw a strong relationship between teachers' low income and their lack of interest in improving their teaching performance.

[G] They are just 'waiting for another bus to turn up; they are thinking of other jobs – some other kind of job; they just wait here and do nothing. It's very difficult for our culture.

[E] If money is inadequate in the family, that will cause problems.

[Q] The salary of the principal of the System College is less than half of the salary of the government college principal.

Incentive.

Competent teachers or those who have a more positive attitude to teaching have alternatives: *[P] They can move to a government school where they have better pay*. Mormon schools can be attractive for the same reason.

So, would better pay help them to be better teachers? *[H] No, but good teachers might go where they get paid more.*

If good teachers are to be retained in the System, incentives other than salary will play a part.

4C Small, Dispersed Population

The country's small population (about 100,000) is spread over about forty islands. 34,000 people live in the capital, Nuku'alofa, on the main island, Tongatapu. There are a couple of major towns but almost everybody else lives in dozens of small villages. Travel among the islands is by air (very expensive) or by boat, including regular ferries in some cases. On Tongatapu itself, there is public transport (buses) but elsewhere people wanting to travel do so in private cars, on horseback or on foot.

> *[M] Culture is different in a school in a village* (compared with Nuku'alofa)*; Western culture is stronger in the city than in the rural area. And they have much more respect for senior people* (nopele) *in the rural area. More traditional in the rural area.*

The curriculum or courses offered do not always reflect the dispersed nature of the populace. For instance, one large island appears to be in economic decay, even though it has potential for tourism and agriculture. One interviewee suggested a solution*:*

> *[R] Build a greenhouse in the school, grow vegetables and fruit and then sell them to restaurants and resorts.*

Such a reasonable approach would require a significant change of approach by the local school. It would also require a change in attitude by parents who might oppose a program which was not 'white collar' and therefore, was undesirable.

> *[O] Students who do not have a good background they often move away from, the island and villages and come to the city. Soon, they drop out of school very early. Problems come from nuclear families more than extended families (*but) *extended families are not as responsible as in the past.*

The Strategic Plan includes the recommendation that one of the education officers be given the specific responsibility for leadership, coordination and mentoring in the outer islands (page 5 of the plan). That was not acted upon.

4D Slow Pace of Life

[J] Affects a classroom? – Yes. It affects a lot, it's careless thinking, just do it, if it follows that it will affect the quick improvements and students' achievements and everything in schools, it's kind of slow pace, but to me it does not help if we are trying to improve

[D] Tongans are hard-working people. versus

[E] I think very lazy to do their work.

[M] Fakafiefiemalie – maybe it's an excuse to say we are very laid back in our ways and things; it's not the same as lazy.

[K] Some people claim that it's the Tongan culture and enough people are doing that. So many times I've heard people say it doesn't matter, tomorrow, I can't do anything and nothing happens. When students' assignments are due they expect you to give them more time automatically; so people need to make the change to agree on things like time, discipline, the quality of the work. People don't know what to do and if you don't give them direction then they just float.

One of the first Tongan words I learned was *a pongipongi* – 'tomorrow'! This word seemed to be an important one in the Tongan way of life.

4E Abuse/Bullying

Unfortunately, striking students with a piece of wood is an oft-used form of managing behaviour in Tongan schools and, indeed, throughout Tongan society. There is considerable resistance to change, despite a public debate and new legislation. I have witnessed beatings frequently; sometimes, knowing my attitude, teachers have tried to hide their pieces of wood as they saw me approach.

"While there is no evidence that corporal punishment improves behaviour or academic achievement … there is considerable evidence of its harmful effects, including physical pain and even death" (Harber & Mncube, 2012, p. 114). Such is the ingrained nature of this type of teacher behaviour, however, its replacement by more positive behaviour management practices doubtless will take a long time to come about.

Not all abuse in schools is physical and not all of it is directed towards students. Junior teachers have been abused by more senior teachers and, despite language differences, it has sometimes been obvious even to me when a group of teachers humiliated a young colleague verbally.

> *[F] You know there is a strong cultural aspect to the way we discipline our kids and this* (public) *debate has heated up more now; there is still a lot of people who believe having our own Tongan way of disciplining is still very much anga fakatonga. Give them a kick and a punch and whatever you call it that should not be a legal issue. That's how Tongans discipline Tongans; there's a lot on the radio these days.*

[A] We really work on teaching the class without any corporal punishment. That's a very touchy subject right now. Just try to use different activities and good words because our students just can't pick up again after being talked to.

How 'traditional' child abuse is in Tonga is not entirely clear. The early missionaries came from a cultural milieu in which corporal punishment of children was deemed necessary and proper and, according to Farmer (1855), they encouraged Tongan parents to 'break the will' of their children and make them unquestioningly obedient by beating them.

> Biblical injunctions to use 'the rod' for the child's own sake were frequently invoked as justification for these views. … In this, as in so many other aspects of Tongan culture, it is impossible to disentangle the strands of 'traditional' and more recently acquired values and behaviours. (Lee, 2011, p. 61).

Corporal punishment is incompatible with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the cultural issue involved, Tongan teachers will need to learn new techniques very soon.

4F Diet

Despite the fact that there is ample nutritious local, traditional food available, many Tongans look to palangi and other non-local food for much of their diet. So, instead of consuming local fruits and vegetables and meats (chickens and pigs), a large number of them prefer foods such as two-minute noodles (from Asia) and mutton flaps (from New Zealand). This food has a high fat, sugar and salt content and, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, can contribute to obesity and the avalanche of illnesses which results from it (such as heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes and diabetes).

[L] People eat a lot and get big; it affects health; I think it's bad. Sometimes a parent's illness will mean they let the children stay home to look after them and that will cause a problem for the school.

In addition to the behaviour noted by that interviewee, poor health can have a direct effect on the classroom performance of teachers, both because of absenteeism and the lethargy exhibited in front of classes.

5. Planning at the school level

In the first stage of data collection, planning was not identified as an aspect of culture with an impact on teacher performance. During my first visit, I asked a senior officer about his plans for the System. He pointed to his temple and said, "They are in here". So, while he believed that there were plans, they were not communicated to anyone else, neither orally nor in written form. This lack of communication was quite obvious to me when I visited schools and saw principals gather around them whichever teachers were within earshot and told them about school news and coming events and expectations. The teachers not present for those briefings usually did not learn later what was said. There was no such thing as a written memo; oral communication was given status by the status of the speaker so little was written. It meant, of course, that any plans that leaders had were not passed on to other staff members.

> Because they think in different ways, it is often difficult for Tongans and palangis to understand each other. Tongans who go overseas to study frequently experience dislocation because their way of thinking is so different from what they encounter at overseas schools and universities. Tongans are accustomed to accepting the voice of authority. Similarly, palangis find it difficult to understand the Tongan way of going about things (Samate, 2007, p.49).

In interviews, several participants expressed views about the Tongans lack of planning skills and understanding.

> *[H] Planning is not part of our culture – I would agree vehement. I do not think we are a culture that is strong on planning because we are a culture that responds to things. We are extended-family based and family events, like funerals or blessings are not planned; not planned in the Western experience where you say "I'm going to have a holiday in December and I will save up my money to do that". We*

don't do that. We respond. It's not in our culture to understand much about planning and nor do it well, I think.

[Q] Planning is a very new idea in the System. There are very few things in the Tongan culture that is planned. Everything depends on the day.

[O] (Teachers) *can do planning, that is what we also teach in the professional development, and how to prepare activities and their classroom. There are a few skills they lack, but what I observe now is it's a bit improved.*

[Q] We can achieve our vision with the support, the authority of those in high position; we have to make use of that support to fulfil our mission.

I have observed the lack of skill and interest in school planning – from overall, System-wide activities to lesson planning by teachers —and I agree with the interviewees who acknowledge the deficiency. This lack of a planning orientation leads to current situations which are uneconomic – very small secondary school classes on several campuses which could be amalgamated, for example. This matter was raised with me several times outside the interview situation, as was the difficulty of finding suitable primary school principals. Both these issues could be addressed with better planning and are considered in my conclusions section. My brief attempts to help leaders design plans and to put them into practice were frustrating for everyone concerned. Specific training in this area will be needed if leaders and teachers are going to be able to have a more Westernised approach to education. Despite the obvious, general ambivalence to the concept of planning among Tongan educators, I have given considerable attention to the matter because it was part of my original brief when I first arrived in the kingdom.

5A Secondary education focus

The President of Wesleyan Education System described the System's tertiary institute as 'the jewel in the crown' of the System at one of the school leaders' gatherings I attended. Certainly, the older the student group, the more resources were provided for them. Staffing levels for secondary schools were much more favourable than are those for primary schools. During my first visit I observed a measure of reluctance to allow primary principals to be included in gatherings with secondary and tertiary leaders. Until 2013, there were few kindergartens in the System and those which did exist were staffed by untrained personnel.

With training, however, comes a change.

> *[S] The majority of kindergarten teachers are very passionate. And very willing to learn new things and to change the way that they are teaching. It's to do with being trained, including the workshops. It starts by acknowledging that what the teachers are doing is really, really important … it builds their enthusiasm and their passion for the work they are doing. It doesn't matter how society sees early childhood education or how the church treats you, but if the scientific research says that ECE teachers are the most important in a child's life, that gives them the push and the courage to improve, every day.*

5B Oral, not written, culture

> *[M] There is hindrance because education is a foreign concept; it's been introduced to our land. We have our way of education but it is in a very informal way. Western style is a formal education and everything has to be written. Ours was oral. It's difficult to bring our mindset from being oral to written education. So with that, maybe in fifty years' time that generation will be totally like that formal written*

education from overseas, but with this generation we still have both our oral and written system.

[M] Oral – It's a good thing in the past because we didn't have anything to write on when we wanted to find ways of how to transmit our knowledge. But these days we have a lot of books and paper and pens around so why don't we use them? To pass on knowledge to the next generation. We are from an oral, unwritten culture and one thing is it saves time from sitting down and really thinking about what you are saying. Also, why not speak it out short and simple like that. The other thing is to save the cost of paper and printing because our resources are very limited so we find way of how to budget; it works … in a way.

[A] Because Tonga's an oral culture we will talk about everything all the time, so when it's time to stop talking, some of us keep talking – that drives me crazy. So then when four of them are together and they are all talking at the same time, nobody's listening and the loudest voice wins – not necessarily the true story!

[A] Tongan is a beautiful language; when you hear the oratory, just the beauty of the language; at functions people will show off their talanoa (talking) *skills – people seem to be not listening but they* are *listening and will discuss what has been said – Westerners probably can't understand – the constant talking, the noise.*

Because of the strong oral tradition, books are not common in schools, or where they do exist, are seldom read. Libraries are poorly organised – librarians are untrained or poorly trained, books are in poor condition, the shelves are usually stocked with out-of-date books given by well-meaning overseas donors many years ago. From time to time, palangi volunteers have spent a great deal of time organising the libraries of various schools;

unfortunately, once the volunteers depart, there is usually a return to previous practices. Books are not part of the Tongan culture and so are not valued highly.

The lack of a written culture can cause uncertainty in 21st century schools, even in Tonga. For example, whereas a Western principal might convey information to staff members via memos or a notice board, a Tongan principal is more likely to talk with those teachers who happen to be present when he/she makes an announcement. The information might not go any further. So, meetings or training sessions will be poorly attended or someone's absence will not be noticed simply because the relevant information was not well-disseminated. For me, a good (if that's the right word) example of this poor communication was the fact that the Panel's Review and Plan were warmly greeted by principals and other leaders but, apparently, few people in schools, such as teachers, learned anything about them. Without good communication, good planning becomes less likely.

This lack of interest in a written culture is a reminder of a conversation mentioned by Plato in one of his Socratic discourses. The 'inventor' of writing, Theuth, told the king, the Egyptian Pharaoh, about the values of the invention. The Pharaoh was less enthusiastic, claiming that it would produce forgetfulness in those people who used it because they would not practise their memories.

5C Peer pressure

[F] Tongans find it difficult to be called outcasts or to not belong. I would rather satisfy my peers and accommodate their needs rather than focussing on making a difference. And the other thing is that there's also the consequence of not being part of the team. Because of the kind of things that can backfire on you. That's where strong culture comes in. [J] When I was young, I was very happy working with old

experienced teachers. With new teachers – we have to address those problems and talk it out with management or the office.

[F] One day a person realises: Why am I doing this (working extra hard)*? What do I get out of this? Because I am just like them. And I still get by. And they get by. I don't get any reward for doing extra.*

[K] A teacher back in school faces peers. That is true, unless learning is reinforced from a central theme, they fall back because for everybody else it is acceptable. But if they are made to see that it's not acceptable then there is a chance of changing it. Three or four new trained teachers together and if they are congratulated, they are used as models. They need to be encouraged; it (principal asking a young teacher to demonstrate) *should be acceptable; if you know of someone who can do a good job they should be encouraged, like a model.*

[K] (Young teacher asked to model a teaching technique?) *It would be very difficult, but with help of principal we need to break this thing; it needs to be the principal. See what the Bible teaches – all are given gifts and talents. It's not disrespectful but if it appears to be, we need to change it.*

[H] The culture in the school is predominant. So, even though we teach them (teachers doing professional development) *wonderful theories and things, there is a high risk in them going back to schools and doing the same things they did before. If the majority is behaving in a certain way, you are not going to risk being the odd one out*

[Q] I have seen most of them and there is nothing, no difference after having a better qualification to what they've been...

As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, peer pressure may have a stultifying effect on the enthusiasm and commitment of many teachers, especially young ones. It will have to be overcome if teaching practice is to improve. Fortunately, many of the interviewees are aware of this.

6. Language

6A Language issues

Language is a significant matter in Tongan education. The usual issue is about the balance of two languages – Tongan and English. There are some bilingual schools in the FWCT System and in other schools, and all secondary and tertiary establishments have a considerable leaning towards English as the language of instruction and it is the language of examinations. Aspirational parents like their children to become fluent in English as that might help with 'white-collar' employment and general success in an increasingly Westernised future, either in Tonga or elsewhere. On the other hand, many educators, including the government's (2013) Minister for Education, are concerned at the potential loss of the Tongans' own language and identity. It is the same debate which affects many small populations (from Australian aborigines and Papuans to Catalans and the Welsh) not wanting to be overwhelmed by larger, more influential societies.

> *[L] Language is a big problem; the Tongan language is all right but the problem with the Tongan language is the writing. At the same time they are speaking very well in the Tongan language but if they write it there are lots of errors. In the English language, they are not so familiar so in middle schools they start to read the books in English. They can understand English better than they can speak it.*

> *[I] This big influence on parents having their children taught in English which has had a real negative impact on education here in Tonga. In terms of reading and*

writing, the levels have dropped. You need to have a good foundation in one language before you learn another one. … A lot of our people still have the idea that if children are taken to English-speaking schools, its quality education … but it's not!

[O] I think English speaking is getting better … Students are exposed frequently to the media – that's a real factor, plus there are more palangis around and lots of people going overseas. But I think there is a danger that young people will not learn to speak Tongan really well; the Minister of Education is trying to emphasise that students up to year 3 they are better learning Tongan.

[L] We are lucky here; The children are looking and looking at TV and movies and pick up English. We are teaching in English; they understand what we are speaking but when I ask for someone to answer, it is very hard for them to answer in English.

[K] I know that there shouldn't be any conflicts there but the reality is the sooner you pick up English the better you can be in your learning; so there is an advantage in understanding both languages and to me I think it's important to be able to do both. The emphasis on English, especially in exams, favours wealthier, elite people because they take children overseas and have access to books. You need English to get ahead in Tonga.

While this last statement is true for students, it is also true for teachers. Those teachers who wish to improve their classroom skills are at an advantage if their command of English is good – they will have greater access to more professional development because much of it is provided in English, either in person or by books and other resources (such as on-line courses). Teachers can benefit from pre- and in-service training from Western sources (such

as New Zealand's Bethlehem Institute) but the level of their command of English will affect their level of benefit.

The language of instruction and the language of the people

In Tonga, it appears that English is the language of sophistication, education and aspiration.

> Although Tongan is the language of culture and tradition, under increasing western influence the cultural and traditional ways are not as highly regarded. … The result is that a majority of indigenous people view English as a vehicle to success in formal education, itself the key for countless opportunities. (Fonua, 1998, p. 32).

6B Success in examinations

English is the language of examinations in Tonga.

[J] Exams in English are good for wealthy families because they take their children to New Zealand and Australia for holidays, or to live.

[R] Education is about getting a piece of paper. But your piece of paper is worth nothing. It depends on what you do with it.

[K] Our students can understand English but don't speak it well; they are not very grammatical. In exams, it involves a lot of grammar, so I'm sure our students will not be in a higher distinction level

[J] They don't do very well in the assessment. I can say most of the students didn't do well.

[T] People teach for exams; that was the main way of assessment. When the first English educators came, we adopted the British model of education and we

followed it through and that means exams. We are trying to introduce school-based assessment but teachers are struggling with it and getting students to do their own research and student-based assessment, some haven't grasped. It's not very Tongan.

Schools, secondary schools especially, appear to focus on examination results, possibly as a result of the early Western educators' and missionaries' priorities. Unfortunately the focus does not result in significant examination success, yet, from both teachers and parents, there is resistance to changing the focus.

Even when there is success in examinations, it does not appear to be celebrated. Moala (2009) wrote "In a society in which we have more PhDs per capita than any other country, we are such a poor example of what education is supposed to produce. The social results from the efforts of 'highly degreed' people have not been something of which we can be proud" (p. 126).

7. Other

7A Drinking kava

Kava is a somnolent drink which is very popular, especially among men, all around the Pacific. Groups of drinkers, sometimes called kava circles, often meet regularly in a social setting. There are clear protocols within a kava circle. Circles often support (financially and in other ways) the local school, especially if the principal is a member. An effect of the drink, however, is that drinkers are likely to be ineffective as teachers the following day – I have observed a number of them asleep at their desks, clearly as a result of drinking kava.

Figure 34 Kava circle

The positives.

[O] If you have kava once a week it is good, but not all night every night. We talk about education and school in the kava club. Education has become one of the most important issues in the kava. They sponsor a lot of scholarships and also support the transport as well.

[L] The good part of kava is, if we want some money for the school, we ask the people who are drinking kava to donate the money and help the school. When I drink kava, the group is made up of a teacher, an office worker, a farmer – we share our experience; I explain what's happening in our school.

[M] It helps lessen your stress; with the boys you share your laugh and that is medicine for the body.

The negatives.

[O] At the moment it does more harm than good.

[J] The men, they go to sleep, there is no planning, they get angry easily and are hitting the kids and worse.

[B] It does hinder improvement if they drink too much; they come home at three or four o'clock; they sleep-in next morning at home or if they come to school, they are not active – they go to sleep in the classroom.

[N] One side is good and one side is bad.

An impartial observer might be less likely to see the good side than the side that results in incompetence and poor attitude in the classroom.

7B Emphasis on sport, music and dance

The low scores accorded to these issues in the phi-sort is at odds with the practice in most schools and colleges. During interviews, a few participants acknowledged the situation.

[M] We have a lot of activities; we bombard the students with them. I'm not saying those activities should be banned but there are too many things happening and going on in a very limited time.

[A] The sharing part of Tongan culture is very good, the singing … the happiness and the singing and the dancing can be very good in the classroom … not too many students are sad here … they are quick to do things. Probably overseas they would question the importance we give it (sport and arts) *but I would not like to lose it.*

There is no doubt that sport (especially rugby), music and dance receive a considerable amount of time and effort in System (and, indeed, Tongan) schools and colleges. School bands sometimes lead funeral processions, school and community concerts usually feature performances by students; inter-house and inter-school sport and choral competitions occupy school personnel's attention for weeks at a time. A successful team (or choir, or troupe or band) can bring acclaim and esteem to a school and are valued for that. All these

group activities, however, can, and do, require time and money and can be distractions from other school priorities and can get in the way of other teaching and learning.

Several interviewees, however, shrugged off these issues with comments such as: *That's an important part of our culture.* The implication is that the situation is not likely to change.

7C Gender issues

This was not regarded as a significant issue by interviewees despite the fact that it is obvious to an outsider that women do not have the same status in the education System as do men. Married women appear to be disadvantaged in promotions and when the Strategic Plan suggested a change (page 9 of the plan), the suggestion was brushed aside. One married female interviewee observed:

[R] It's not that they are resistant to what I say – they just ignore me.

Gender issues are also at the heart of Tongan society. In a discussion about which students study which subjects – *[U] If a boy wants to study cooking he can be good at it, although I think, realistically, there will be stigmas at home about that kind of thing. It's not gender neutral.*

[I] Exam results have shown up two excellent teachers. What do we do with them? Make them principals? But that's not realistic because they're both women.

7D Ageism

This aspect of culture was not highly rated during the phi-sort and received little attention during the interviews. Perhaps ageism is masked by faka'apa'apa (respect), a 'Core Value'.

[D] Junior teachers respect senior teachers.

[L] In school it doesn't make any difference. The older ones and the young ones - it's the same thing.

7E Climate

The climate of Tonga is tropical, bringing hot days, warm waters, sandy beaches and waving palm trees. Tonga is also subject to cyclones and torrential rains. In general, however, it is a climate which encourages lethargy rather than activity. People walk at a slow rate and even the teenagers carry umbrellas as shelter from the sun.

Interviewees had little to say on a subject about which they could do nothing and several dismissed the issue with words such as: *Well, that's Tonga, after all.*

Figure 35 That's Tonga!

East and West

Nisbett claimed that "Asians view the world through a wide-angled lens, Westerners have tunnel vision" (2003, p. 89) and went on to indicate some of the theoretical differences between more Asian cultures and more Western cultures (see Table 11).

Table 11
Nisbett's Two Different Cultures Theory

ASIANS	WESTERNERS
Interdependent world where self is part of a larger whole	Self is unitary free agent
Value success because reflect well on group	Success valued because badge of personal merit

Value fitting-in (use self-criticism)	Value individuality / look good knowing themselves
Attuned to feelings of others, interpersonal harmony	Sacrifice harmony for fairness
Accepting of hierarchy / group control	Equality / personal action
Avoid controversy and debate	Argumentation is valued

Tongan culture probably comes between these two forms but closer to the Asian. For instance, Tongans are accepting of hierarchy and avoid argumentation (Samate, 2007). One significant difference between Tongans and Chinese, however, is that Tongans, belonging to a small, economically dependent nation might wish to lean towards the West to a greater extent than are the residents of a large, economically stronger nation, such as China.

Nisbett (2003) also explained the difference between the two types of culture in slightly different terms: “There are many ways of parsing the distinction between relatively independent and relatively interdependent societies, but in illustrating these it may be helpful to focus on four related but somewhat distinct dimensions:

- Insistence on freedom of individual action vs. a preference for collective action;
- Desire for individual distinctiveness vs. a preference for blending harmoniously with the group;
- A preference for egalitarianism and achieved status vs. acceptance of hierarchy and ascribed status; and
- A belief that the rules governing proper behaviour should be universal vs. a preference for particularistic approaches that take into account the context and the nature of the relationships involved (p. 61).

Again, Tonga appears to be generally leaning towards the 'relatively interdependent' type of society.

Of course, it cannot be assumed that there is complete homogeneity within any culture and there is not a clear-cut division between the two types of society. Thus, they are less accurately depicted as separate and different as in Figure 30 and more like the overlapping model in Figure 31.

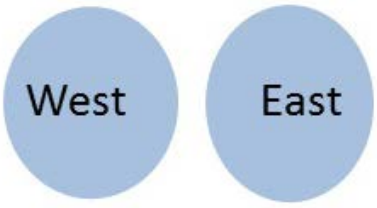


Figure 32 West and East A

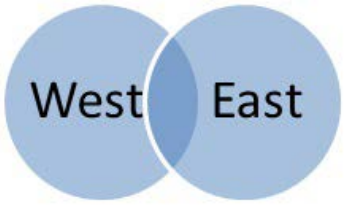


Figure 33 West and East B

While the stereotypes of 'West' and 'East' portray statistically significant characteristics across societies, there will be limited consistency. Increasingly, in a society such as Tonga's, there is likely to be tensions between traditional cultural practices on one hand and the modern Western influences on the other. For instance, traditional societal collectivism and respect for elders will not sit easily with modern Western media and social networking, facts of life in 21st century Tonga.

Summary of interview responses

Throughout this chapter it has appeared that the interviewees believe that there are several aspects of Tongan culture which impact on classroom teaching performance either in a positive or negative way or both.

It seems that the most important aspect is hierarchy, based on social status (birth) and/or achievements (in terms of position, wealth or other 'success'). This is seen as having the potential for positive as well as negative effects in bringing about change.

This aspect of culture has some attendant corollaries. These corollaries include:

- faka'apa'apa – The respect shown to people in senior positions curtails improvement in skills unless the senior person wills it and makes it happen; it is one of the Four Core Values of Tongan culture identified by Queen Salote;
- 'parapet effect' – Tongans are not encouraged to 'put their heads above the parapet' as it is seen to be 'showing off' and disrespectful; young teachers are deterred from expressing views or trying new approaches to teaching; most of the interviewees saw the parapet effect as a problem in the quest for improvement in classroom skills;
- leadership – The perceived quality of skills of people in leadership positions was not high; the visibility and contribution of senior officers is generally regarded as inadequate by those people interviewed;
- accountability – This is not a Tongan characteristic despite Christian teachings; people (including leaders) do not accept responsibility in a Western sense (in finances and in results) but do so in cultural matters;
- fatalism –Tongans appear to have an unquestioning acceptance of circumstances; "It's not up to me; I don't have any say; God wills it or the king or the principal or somebody else said it and I have no say in it"; it has an enervating effect on teachers' attitudes to improving their performance;

- number of faifekau (ordained ministers**)** – All System tertiary and secondary institutions (and some others) have a number of faifekau/teachers on staff (a total of 60 in 2013);

  Other aspects of Tongan culture acknowledged as having an impact include:

- family responsibilities – Tongans support their extended families in many ways, including remittances, funerals, hospitality; as an extension of this, school equipment is shared within a community;
- slow pace of life – This aspect of Tongan life is quite admirable in many ways, but planning documents and other records are often late or non-existent; the changeover times between lessons can be very long; (Tongans use the word *fakafiefiemalie* to express this aspect – explained to me by various people as ‘laid back’, ‘slow pace’, ‘no voice’, ‘don’t rock the boat’, ‘why bother?’);
- peer pressure – Conformity is an important aspect of Tongan culture so anyone who attempts to step outside the norm is subjected to pressure from peers, especially on a school staff.

Judging by the interview responses, all the aspects of culture listed in this summary are regarded as significant in any efforts to improve teacher performance. The interviewees invariably perceive these aspects in a negative light but see them as so basic to their culture that they are nearly immutable. Some interviewees acknowledge the need for change but are not confident of it happening.

To compound the situation, these aspects have a great impact on the attitudes of teachers, parents and leaders. These attitudes, which were identified as most significant during the phi-sort stage of data collection appear to result in a conservative, resistant attitude to change and to improvement in performance, according to the interviewees.

Although the group activity suggested that the church had a significant impact on the school ethos, interviewees had relatively little to say on the topic other than to reflect on the disconnection between teachers' faith and their work practices.

A visiting palangi (Westerner) might perceive a greater significance in outside influences than is acknowledged by the Tongans, but, given the parameters of this thesis, those perceptions are not wholly relevant.

Three of the interviewees were involved in early childhood education and all three spoke enthusiastically about developments in the System's kindergartens. This area appears to be one of the success stories of the FWCT at present and it is hoped that the church and the System are able to maintain the current impetus. None of the other interviewees mentioned it, possibly reflecting the past low status of this basic area of education.

Action research commences with a broadly defined question, problem or issue. "Investigations therefore seek initially to clarify the issue investigated and to reveal the way participants describe their actual experience of that issue – how things happen and how it affects them" (Stringer, 2014, p. 36).

The approach I've taken in this investigation has certainly given to the FWCT Education System leaders an opportunity to describe their experiences and ideas about teaching – an opportunity which they grabbed with (perhaps, surprising) enthusiasm. They were involved in all stages of this piece of action research, from the initial observations during my first visit, the resulting actions, the consequent revision of plans, then the reflections and observations and actions and plans and so on.

Linking the findings to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological mode

This study has identified that are then are a range of within school and external to

school influences that act onto the teachers and students in Tonga. It is possible to map these Tongan factors that influence Tongan schooling, to the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model (see Figure. 4).

- Individual teacher level- personal attitudes, family responsibilities, low income;
- Microsytem – church affiliation, workplace, abuse;
- Mesosystem – nepotism, kava (traditional social drink), faifekau (kinship obligations);
- Exosystem – education system, 'parapet syndrome' (keeping in one's social place in the kindship hierarchy), language issues;
- Macrosystem – rank, fatalism, increasing Westernisation.

All of these Tongan factors are interactive and so affected each other over time – the Chronosystem.

The finding that the results of this research can be mapped to Bronfenbrenner's social model further corroborates that Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model is still a valid model in social science research although it does have limitations and critics such as Bond (1997). This research while Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model does not reject Bond's claim that "human behaviour cannot be accounted for solely on the basis of ecological adaptation: external influences are an essential (and possibly increasingly important) source of influence" (Bond 7, p. 144). In fact the findings of this research also lend support to Bond's claim that a person has agency and can shift between contexts and make a conscious and rational decision to selectively listen and respond to different stakeholders particularly at the mesosystem and other external levels. In this study while the teachers engaged in the professional development they still processed the professional development information

through a Pacifica Islander perspective and selectively listened to and accepted information, a process that was also identified in Thaman's (2007) research in Tonga.

Tension between two cultures

This research is supportive of those researchers, such as Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) and Nisbett (2003) who have maintained that individuals often have to operate within two cultures and this is a source of tension. This study has noted this tension between Western and Tongan cultures but the findings of this school based research also suggests that the Tongans are still maintaining this tension in balance. In this, this study's findings are supportive of those of Daly (1999) and Samate (2007) who both claimed that the Tongans are adapt at balancing the tensions between a traditional village economy, kindship, and life style, with a world economy and international life style. While this research notes that this balance is being maintained, it also acknowledges that this balance is under pressure and in time there is an ongoing drift towards more of a world economy and international life style focus.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS

This chapter is focussed on reflecting on findings and further linking the findings to the research literature and the aims of the study.

Moala (2009) quoted his father*: "E kei Tonga pe'a Tonga, he 'ikai ke lava 'e koe 'o liliu"*("Tonga will always be Tonga; you will never be able to change it") (Moala, 2009, p. 97).

Yet, Tonga has changed; its culture has changed over recent centuries and decades. The work of the missionaries in the early nineteenth century, for instance, resulted in a massive change from pagan worship to Christianity. Related to that change was the introduction and adoption of Western education. Rugby became a national obsession. Easy travel led to increased contact with other cultures, values and practices, especially those of Western countries such as Australia and New Zealand. Mormonism arrived and brought about its own changes within Tonga. During recent decades, the huge developments in technology around the world have left their mark on Tongan culture, for better and worse.

Tonga has changed and, presumably, despite the tensions involved, will continue to change.

Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) described traditional cultures, such as Tonga's as 'progress resistant' but changes are not unheard of, as noted above. The important thing for the FWCT education leaders to identify is whether some aspects of culture are able to be utilised to make more likely the desired change in teacher performance.

A key element of the likelihood for change these days is the involvement of the Tongans themselves in identifying the need to change and the ways to go about it. That

includes changes in the education system and in the way teachers teach. An interviewee identified *le fin mot* of this thesis with the assertion that:

> *[A] The Western system can't be imposed and Tongans won't let it be imposed. That's why there's little change in some things because they just do things the Tongan way. Also, change takes time; it's not going to happen in a year. It may take ten years to slowly change things and if you push people to change, they may go against it. I think the best thing to do is introduce it and then give it to Tongan leaders and let them do with it what they will, or not do anything with it. But I think that the underlying thing is* Tongans *have to take the reins of our education system.*

Another interviewee added:

> *[Q] I would like to see more people here from outside but I would like to see us maintain our culture. … I am hoping the two can merge somewhere; we can still have our culture, be so strong in our culture and we can still select from the Western what is best for us.*

One more comment about the long-term effect of outsiders' contributions*:*

> *[W] They* (Tongans) *want to listen, they hear and respect you* (overseas advisors) *but when you go home they all go back to the same as they used to do.*

PART A – BRINGING ABOUT THE CHANGES

[G] "Culture can get in the way of a good education."

One potential result of doing research is that the focus could be on the problem under consideration and little attention be given to finding a solution to that problem. Action

research can change this situation so that, out of the research, a solution emerges. An example from the FWCTES project was described on page 33 of this thesis. It involved the nomenclature of senior officer positions and, over my five visits, the situation became clearer and effective. It required all five visits to bring about the necessary changes such that they were 'owned' by the stakeholders. The final visit revealed that the new arrangements were operating successfully. Officers were becoming better informed and more enthusiastic about their duties and principals had a better understanding of the situation and could act more positively. In the data-collection section of this thesis and especially the interviews, it was apparent that leadership issues were of concern for many of the participants and it is hoped that that situation could be ameliorated somewhat by the discovered solution.

So, through a cyclic process of observing – reflecting – acting – planning – acting – observing – reflecting and so on, a solution was found to the problem and, importantly, found and acted upon, by the stakeholders. The main conclusion was that change is unlikely to happen unless the Tongan educators take responsibility for it.

Suggestions on enhancing teaching in Tongan

Along with my own observations and the thoughts of a number of writers, comments made by Tongan education leaders during interviews I conducted with them cause me to reach some conclusions about the ways in which classroom skills of FWCT Education System teachers might be improved.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) 'Microsystem' and 'Mesosystem'

Like Tonga generally, the FWCT Education System is functioning between two worlds – the traditional Tongan world which is basic to the people's way of life (largely associated with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) 'Microsystem' and 'Mesosystem') on one hand and,

on the other, the more modern, palangi, Western world (mainly the 'Exosystem' and 'Macrosystem') to which some education leaders and others appear to aspire. This is one of the greatest points of tension within the System and within Tongan society.

Some point on a continuum between homeostasis (i.e. staying the same) and excessive dynamism (i.e. a great deal of change) might be found. Finding that point will be elusive for, even within each person, there is likely to be a measure of tension. Leaders might claim to be looking for changes but they may need to feel a good deal more discomforted before they pursue actively the improvements they claim to seek.

The "concept of *anga fakatonga* (traditional Tongan ways) is undergoing constant reconfiguration, as it always has, and could accommodate considerable political change while retaining its profound symbolic significance as well as needing a re-interpretation of values" (Morton, 1996, p. 264).

The traditional culture has changed over time, especially since the Methodist missionaries arrived two centuries ago, and, if the nation is to thrive in the twenty first century, it will probably have to continue to change. Daly (1999) asserted that "the ability to adopt and absorb without losing its essential character seems to be a continuing thread running through Tongan history" (p. 24). This is an encouraging and vital attitude for System leaders to have as they seek to improve the teaching and learning which takes place in their schools – they need not feel as if they are held back by their past.

"Our past, which has to do with our traditional culture, is to be treasured as long as we are not prisoners of it. It should inform the present and positively shape the future" (Samate, 2007, p. 55).

Language and instruction

A significant aspect of current Tongan life which causes unease and tension is the use of two languages – Tongan and English. The government, the System, individual teachers, business people and parents have a wide range of views about when each language should be part of school life. So, there are bilingual schools (staffed by teachers who are not always highly proficient in English), MEWAC (government ministry) policies and curricula, examinations in English, expectations of parents whose aspirations for their children often include skill in English, the demands of employers, increasing overseas travel, modern communications and the concerns held by many that the Tongan language is being lost. There is no easy answer for the search to find a generally acceptable answer to the tensions involved during this time of transition. System leaders might consider following the example of a school district in Ontario, Canada:

> in which aboriginal students comprised 40% of the enrolment and (the district) addressed the fact that many of them had been deprived of their own heritage language and also excluded from the majority language of English. Thus they began by developing basic oral language capabilities as a foundation for future learning (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012, p. 125).

Certainly, the present situation, in Tonga generally and in the system in particular, causes concern to some of the interviewees and will need to be addressed. The present confusion regarding the English language in schools does little to help with teacher attitudes to their work and the attitudes of parents towards education.

Culture and change

Some aspects of the Tongan culture will hamper the rate and nature of change but some aspects may be harnessed to facilitate changes, including those desired by education leaders. Leaders have expressed concerns about the need for change/improvement in teachers' classroom performance, believing that it is generally not of a high standard. I

suspect, however, that while the leaders need the desire, the will and the means to change, at present they have little more than the dream.

> A common assumption in educational improvement projects undertaken in developing countries is to take for granted local people's commitment to success. … Most development projects respond to external views of what any given developing country imperatively means. … If their (local people's) overall view is limited, so is their commitment to quality and effectiveness as well as their level of responsibility and accountability (Chadwick & Valenzuela, 2006, pp. 8-9).

Leaders have identified poor teacher attitude as a significant reason for the perceived low standard of teaching. Some of this attitude may be attributed to *fakafiefiemalie*, the Tongan quality of 'laidbackedness' (and which some outsiders might see as laziness). There is probably little to be done about this aspect of Tongan culture but other aspects can be addressed with some chance of bringing about the desired improvement.

Teachers' attitudes in Tonga are seldom what Western educators would regard as professional. To change those attitudes, Tongan leaders will need to address a number of issues. Just expecting teachers to 'change their attitude' or 'lift their game' is hardly sufficient. The education environment will need to be considered.

Watkins and Biggs (1996) while considering the issues involved in providing high quality professional development in a non-Western country, pointed out some of the variables which are involved. Figure 26 in the Attitudes section of Chapter 4, Part A helps to clarify this.

The Tongan cultural context in which professional development would take place includes macrosystem aspects such as the ubiquitous hierarchical structure and the importance of religious beliefs. The context will also include the nature of the buildings in which teachers work as part of their teaching context; further, the great significance of a teacher's family is another part of the cultural microsystem. Slightly outside that context but

highly relevant to professional development are issues such as the fact that many of the teachers have received training from a New Zealand institution and that the gradually developing national curriculum includes many non-Tongan elements.

So, if the skills, knowledge and attitudes of System teachers are to change through on-going professional development, considerable sensitive planning will be needed on the part of leaders. Unfortunately, as one of the System leaders I interviewed observed, "Planning is not part of our culture … It is not in our culture to understand much about planning nor do we do it well, I think".

School leadership and change in Tonga

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1994), considering schools that are devoted mainly to maintaining the status quo, pointed out that:

> "When innovation does occur, it usually: is introduced by the individual teacher rather than the headteacher and is a product of that individual's enthusiasm and ambition" and then ask. "So, what innovation is there going to be in a system which, because of the social hierarchy, discourages teachers from showing enthusiasm and ambition?" (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994, p.1).

It comes down to leadership. If there is going to be any change in Tongan schools, the qualities of principals and other leaders will be foremost.

The first of Palestrini's (2000) ten steps for educational reform is the fostering of a climate for change. He stressed the importance of leadership in this fostering:

> The need for change in the context of continuous improvement should be articulated constantly by institutional leaders. College presidents, superintendents and principals should set the tone for change by taking every opportunity to articulate its necessity and model it in their own leadership (Palestrini, 2000, p. 8).

He went on to assert that if leaders (or, at least, those people in senior positions) are to be facilitators of change, their behaviours should feature:

1. Vision
2. Structuring the school as a workplace
3. Structuring involvement with change
4. Sharing responsibility
5. Decision making
6. Guiding and supporting and
7. Structuring their professional roles.

FWCTES leaders are likely to find it difficult to display some of those behaviours, including sharing responsibility and structuring involvement with change - they involve planning. Despite the progress in planning made during my visits, the leaders might still have difficulty with another of Palestrini's (2000) steps – the preparation of an action plan (p. 53).

Palestrini (2000) assessed the relative importance of favourable and opposing forces when it comes to facilitating change. He claims that reducing resistance to change will create less tension than increasing forces to bring it about. Given the level of tension which exists in a culture already in some kind of transition, a wise leader would acknowledge that and seek ways to reduce resistance through often simple procedures such as arranging transport to professional development sessions for teachers from outlying villages (and, perhaps, providing a meal afterwards) or ensuring that education officers paid a good many non-threatening visits to schools. This would all be part of fostering a climate for change, Palestrini's 'first step for educational reform'.

Professional development and change

Providing better opportunities for professional development will not be enough, however. To try to improve the products of schooling by changing just one facet is likely to be counter-productive if other components of the school system remain unchanged.

Good learning is more likely to take place in teaching environments that possess the following characteristics, according to Nisbett (2003):

1. Teaching methods are varied, emphasising student activity, self-regulation and student-centredness, with much cooperative and other group work;
2. Content is presented in a meaningful context;
3. Small classes;
4. Warm classroom climate;
5. High cognitive level outcomes are expected and addressed in assessment; and
6. Assessment is classroom-based and conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere (p. 45).

Leaders will need to consider all aspects of a teacher's life and work if the best possible outcomes are to be achieved. Day (2008) referred to research findings which indicate that:

> Pupils of teachers who are committed and resilient are more likely to attain more than pupils whose teachers are not. An implication of this finding is that policy makers, national organisations and head teachers concerned with raising standards in schools need to address the associations between teachers' well-being, commitment, resilience and effectiveness by providing more robust, comprehensive personnel support structures (Day, 2008, p. 257).

According to several interviewees, one way to help bring about changes in attitude is the provision of good professional development. While there is a perceived need for professional development for teachers in the System, attempts in the past have not proved as fruitful as had been hoped for. Thus, palangi (Western) experts who have been 'parachuted in' by NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) and other agencies for limited periods have not had a lasting effect. Short training periods leading to certificate or diploma qualifications have, likewise, had a limited effect. In-service professional development provided within the

System has not been consistent or well-attended. It has all been too piecemeal, too ad hoc, with little attention to long-term or even medium-term planning and follow-up.

Some possible actions in the area of professional development on the part of leaders are outlined below.

1. Ensure that promising teachers-to-be and prospective leaders receive good pre-service training in high quality institutions and require that the courses studied include education and pedagogy as well as content subjects such as chemistry and history. Scholarship donors do not always have the knowledge needed or the desire for this change of emphasis.
2. Provide significant pre-service training for all teachers in the System and to insist that only those teaching applicants with suitable qualifications are employed.
3. Provide regular in-service training at which attendance and involvement are mandatory for continued employment. Claiming that salary increases are dependent on involvement is too tepid and the stated consequences are ignored too easily. This professional development might be done centrally (in the System's head office, for instance) or at individual schools or clusters of schools. During the early stages of this approach, Education Officers would be required to provide the leadership for the training programs. Later, discrete positions for such leadership, including visiting educators fitting into a longer-term strategy, could be considered. This provision would need to be planned, however. Interviewees acknowledged that planning is not an important aspect of Tongan culture but if improvement is to be made, some planning skills would have to be developed along with other management skills; Gorinski (2007) wrote that:

> Principal, senior management team and governance support, involvement and on-going commitment and participation are critical success factors, and key components to the sustainability of projects. Such principals will ensure that the goals of any professional development initiative are embedded in school policies and procedures to ensure sustainability (Gorinski, 2007, p. 473).

4. Plan for teachers completing a substantial period of training to be placed in suitable environments. Too often, newly-trained, skilled, enthusiastic teachers find themselves alone on a school staff where the ethos does not allow for innovation and commitment and the Tongan need to 'belong' results in their diminished contribution. Chances of maximising the desirable qualities of new teachers could be enhanced if several of them were placed in the same school, thus allowing for the possibility of a sustainable 'critical mass' of enthusiasm and skill. Chances of this maximisation happening would be even greater if principals and education officers developed mentoring skills and attitudes. The Tongan culture's valuing of authority should enable senior officers to be good, effective examples to their subordinates.

Another way to help change teachers' attitudes to their work would be the improvement of their working conditions. Salary levels are very low and the likelihood of them being raised to match those of government and Mormon systems is not promising. One way to redress the issue would be to employ fewer teachers, thus releasing money which could be used to increase the salaries of competent teachers. Some secondary schools are greatly overstaffed, often by unskilled, untrained personnel. Fewer, more competent teachers might help to change attitudes and affect good teachers' thoughts of leaving to join other systems. If good teachers remain, they could have a salutary effect on others, especially the newly-qualified teachers mentioned above.

Teacher Professional Development

After researching the underachievement of Maori students in New Zealand (a group not unlike many Tongan students), Gorinski (2007) asserted that "A critical component in raising Maori student achievement is enhanced pedagogical practice" and that a key to this is "improved efficacy in teacher professional development" (p. 471-2).

She identified a number of critical success factors in building this teacher efficacy, among them:

- The unqualified support, participation, commitment and leadership of the principal and other school leaders;
- The commitment of leadership to embed change to ensure sustainability;
- The competence of facilitators;
- Full staff involvement and a receptivity to change;
- A recognition that change takes time;
- The availability of resources (including finance) for teacher release for professional development and monitoring;
- Recognition of staff as professionals and 'out-of-hours' time for professional development should be high quality and
- Regular evaluation and measurement of change.

Gorinski (2007) emphasised that:

> Principal, senior management team and governance support, involvement and on-going commitment and participation are critical success factors, and key components to the sustainability of such projects. Such principals will ensure that the goals of any professional development initiative are embedded in school policies and procedures to ensure sustainability (Gorinski, 2007, p. 473).

Further, Mulford (2008) identified five barriers to implementing effective practice in the school:

- High staff turnover (of both principals and teachers);
- Lack of support by leaders;
- Failure to regard professional development as a priority;
- Pre-existing beliefs and attitudes and a resistance to change among stakeholders; and
- Inadequate assessment and reporting systems.

The evidence formed from Mulford's (2008) research is supportive of the claim that enhancing students' achievement is dependent on responsive teachers, who operate within a supported learning environment, who actively participate in on-going, high quality professional development, who review, modify, talked and adapt their teaching within the context of the classroom (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Mulford, 2003; 2008).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory would place professional development in the microsystem of teachers' functioning especially in the case of Tonga. This is because other aspects of the Tongan context and cultural system (such as, family responsibilities and poverty) as well as the wider systems (such as, respect of rank and their attitude to time) directly or indirectly impact on the implementation of any professional development. There is likely to be tension between Aristotle's (Western) logic and Samate's (2007) (Tongan) spiral thinking. Added to that, any plans for professional development prepared without significant local input are "bound to fail", according to Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006, p. 12).

School leadership and Tonga

This study is supportive of the notion that Tongan culture influences classroom teaching practice with the principal an important agent in maintaining this influence, as suggested by Samate (2007). The quality of leadership (invariably that demonstrated by the

participant's superordinate) was often mentioned during interviews. Most of the leaders were regarded as ineffectual and invisible. This is perhaps surprising in a culture wherein respect and obedience to higher authorities is so important. Leaders at every level might be well advised to make constructive use of this aspect of their culture. They might indicate an expectation related to, say, attendance at professional development activities but then they must use their authority to insist on attendance and ensure that there are consequences for attendance and non-attendance. Leaders who look for improvement in their subordinates cannot indulge in "fakafiefiemalie" (Tongan for relaxing, carefree) themselves or by avoiding their own professional development. School-based personnel wish to see their leaders more.

Tongan school leadership does have some of the features of Day's (2008) 'distributed leadership' model, but the leadership is more distributed within the community and within kinship links at the village level. This is in contrast to Day's distributed model that is supportive of Western school leadership model where more of the leadership was distributed with and across the teachers with a school. The evidence form this study is supportive of a leadership model that is it is more top down (principal or school authority to the teachers) rather than more bottom up from the teachers to principal or school authority.

In this Tongan, school leadership is in what Macbeath (2008, p.28) would describe as 'traditional school leadership' and less of what Macbeath described as 'servant school leadership'. Macbeath suggests that innovation and change is more likely to occur in schools when a servant school leadership model is adopted, and there is greater distributed of leadership across the teaching staff of the school. Certainly, the difficulty of enacting change in Tongan schools, suggests that Macbeth's interpretation about school innovation is more likely when teachers have more say in a school is supported in this study of school principals in Tonga. One of the Tongan education leaders whom I interviewed was adamant, however, that "A servant leader is a Christian idea but it is not Tongan school idea".

This more top down leadership model in Tongan schools is in part related to Tongan cultural values. Spillane and Diamond (2007) claimed that the overall culture of the school and how teachers interacted and behaved towards students is influenced by that school's culture and the principal of the school does influence the overall school culture and its practices. Spillane and Diamond also noted that teachers can influence this culture, but often the teachers within a school maintain a school's culture because they understand that culture and how it operates and they have agency and even control within that culture. They have normalised that culture. Certainly the findings of this study would support Spillane and Diamond's (2007) claim, as the Tongan teachers were influenced by their cultural context. The finding of Tongan school leadership in this research tend to validates Nisbett's (2003) assertion, "We are what we are because of culturally based learning" (p. 9). As noted in this study, the Tongan teachers found it difficult to think and act like Westerners, even with professional development. They processed the Western information from a Tongan perspective and this was also noted by Thaman's (2007).

Suggestions for leadership change

One form of management I discussed and demonstrated on many occasions in Tonga schools was management-by-walking-around (MBWA). This technique does not require a great deal of effort on the part of principals but, if used consistently in a planned manner, it could reap significant positive results. Similarly, education officers might use management-by-*driving*-around, just appearing unannounced, and frequently, in schools for a brief visit and without the expectation of time-consuming, wasteful (from a Western viewpoint) hospitality. Such an approach is somewhat contrary to Tongan culture, but, if leaders wish for improvement in classroom performance, they might need to be more innovative. A few interviewees have witnessed the effect of MBWA and understand its potential benefits. I agree strongly with Hargreaves and Shirley (2012), who asserted that "leadership begins with

leaders showing up, so they feel the pulse of learning that is beating in their system's classrooms and schools" (p. 183).

A strategy associated with management is the ability to dismiss ineffective employees, but again, there is tension between the Tongan and the Western worlds in this process. In a Christian environment where forgiveness is an important part of faith, and the granting of a 'second chance' a general expectation, dismissing a colleague (especially if that colleague is a relative or long-term acquaintance) must be difficult. Sometimes, however, it might be necessary. Otherwise the whole System can be undermined. Only competent, committed teachers should be employed and retained, but Tongan kinship links within the village and the community often made it difficult for the school principal to assert authority over staff.

Preparation of leaders needs to be improved

The evidence from the interviews was the Tongan principals and other senior educators were often ill-prepared to take on the leadership roles. This point was also noted by Finau (2017) and the Tongan Ministry of Education and Training (2017). There was no formal training in leadership or management available for them either before they are appointed or 'on-the-job'. Even those with degrees from overseas universities invariably have graduated in a 'content' subject and have no pedagogical preparation. One interviewee *[W]* said that "They got a degree in a subject 30 years ago and now they are leaders in education; they've never read anything at all about education".

The evidence is that the Tongan Wesleyan school system of appointments did little to help prepare someone for a new leadership role. There was no advertising of positions, no applications, no interviews or any of the usual Western precursors to a new appointment. Instead, the leaders of the church and of the education system decide all appointments and

announce them at the church's annual conference, live on radio. New appointees do not necessarily seek promotion but suddenly found themselves having to move house, perhaps even to a different island, and to make all the necessary family and community adjustments with little time and no useful preparation for the new role.

While I was in Tonga, several senior educators attended a management conference in Sydney but on their return, there was no opportunity or expectation that any new skills or knowledge would be disseminated or shared. It was a one-off, ad hoc excursion which appeared to do nothing to increase the participants' leadership or even teaching attributes. The problem is in Tongan school often the teachers themselves have very limited understanding of the content being taught and limited understanding about instruction and exposure of how to conduct meaningful lessons for their students, a finding that was also noted by Finau (2017). This situation is in contradiction to what Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) suggests should be occurring in terms of understanding instruction school leadership: "According to a growing number of researchers, policy makers and practitioners, committed leaders who understand instruction and can develop both teachers' individual capacities and school organizations' capacities for improvement are the key to solving the mounting crisis in education" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 143). The first requirement, is to "understand instruction" but if the Tongan educators have a limited understanding of instruction and have not learned the attributes of good teaching themselves, it is unlikely that they will be able to perform effectively in their leadership functions of mentoring and managing when they are appointed to leadership positions. Thus, the lack of understanding associated with quality instruction is thus perpetuated over time, and even when the school leader wants to be innovative, the principal lacks the skills and knowledge to introduce any real instructional change across the school. The result is the Tongan schools have a school culture and system that reinforces rote learning and examinations (Finau, 2017; Pohiva, 2014).

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga has expectations of its employees in the System, but these expectations are not always clearly spelled out. Several interviewees commented that teachers are not all totally committed to their church and their Christian faith and do not seem to understand the relationship between that faith and its practical applications in the workplace. Biblical texts on the classroom walls might be admirable but they are not an adequate replacement for good stewardship or for bearing one's share of the work of educating students.

A surprising majority of interviewees claim that the presence of so many ordained church ministers (faifekau) on school teaching staffs has a deleterious effect on classroom teaching. An outsider could be forgiven for expecting that faifekau on a staff would improve the level of collegial commitment to carrying out the required work of educating students in a Christian environment – the task for which they are employed. It appears, however, that the contrary is true. Faifekau become uninterested in their teaching roles, preferring to put their energies and time into the better paid and more prestigious church roles. They are certainly not seen as good role models or as inspiring good classroom performance among their teaching colleagues. Furthermore, issues can arise because of the changing status of a faifekau.

The issue of so many ineffectual faifekau-teachers is one almost wholly in the hands of church and education leaders. They can simply choose to not appoint/ordain any more. The interviewees believe that classroom teaching performance across the schools could improve as a result.

The power of the noble families

The attitude of parents (as perceived by the interviewees and the participants in the phi-sort) towards education is a more difficult issue for leaders to address. The difference in

attitudes between well-educated parents and less well-educated ones appears to be considerable. Children of educated parents living in villages often wish to enrol their children in schools in Nuku'alofa, the capital, where it is thought that the standard of teaching must be higher than in the village schools. High ranking "noble" families assume that they have the right to choose where their children attend and can be offended if room cannot be made for them in the crowded city schools at the expense of commoner children. This is a feature of traditional culture and principals feel pressured unless they are confident of support from the church and System leaders, which is unlikely to occur as the "noble" families have an indirect influence over the senior pastors as noted by Samate (2007).

Parents have limited engagement

As might have been the case in a Western society in past decades, many less educated parents have difficulty understanding the teaching practices in kindergartens where 'all they do is play all day – they can do that at home'. Continuing education of these parents by competent and credible practitioners and leaders can allay these concerns with time and experience. Again, the leaders need to be supporting the teachers and principals.

> Play has long held a revered place in the early childhood curriculum. Play is regarded as a vehicle for learning as well as a place where children can demonstrate their learning. Traditional views of play emphasise it as a positive experience, where children exercise choice, autonomy and freedom … a child-directed, rather than adult-directed experience (Arthur et al., 2012, p. 99).

These sentiments certainly apply in a Western setting but might be out of place in a traditional Tongan family where the idea of children exercising choice and freedom does not sit easily.

It is the case that looking after the welfare of the clan or family is a significant part of the Tongan culture, but the presence of so many family members in teaching positions for

which they are not trained and which might not be essential (especially in secondary schools) should cause concern to the System leaders.

Suggestions for Change

Staffing issues in schools

The matters of too many teachers and inequality in staffing are ones over which the leaders have a good deal of control. Primary schools tend to be understaffed, resulting in the need for principals to have full-time teaching loads. This means they were not available to support and monitor their junior colleagues. Secondary schools, on the other hand, were frequently overstaffed in some subject areas; teachers often have only a very small teaching load in terms of lessons taught and in terms of class sizes. I observed several instances where there was only one student in a class. During my first visit, the Review Panel indicated in the Five-Year Plan (page 8 of the plan) that reductions in total staffing levels of 20 in Year 1 of the plan and a further 20 in Year 2 would be appropriate and that further reductions might be needed at a later date. In practice, by my fifth and final visit, the number of teachers had actually increased in the secondary section and nothing had changed in the primary sector. So, as a matter of some urgency, this situation could be improved by System leaders if they showed economic and educational leadership outside the Tongan cultural context. Unfortunately, as an interviewee observed, “Culture can get in the way of a good education”.

Teachers who are frequently absent from school or classroom, or who showed little evidence of good planning or who did not attend training sessions should not be employed indefinitely. Leaders need to show strong leadership in this matter, even if the Tongan culture and kinship obligations makes it difficult for them as noted by Daly (1999), Maka, Fua, and Pene, 2006; and Samate (2007).

Rationalisation of resources

Rationalisation of courses in secondary schools is an issue which could be taken more seriously by leaders. It would be difficult on the outer islands but on Tongatapu it could reduce a number of problems. On this one island there are, in the System, three large secondary schools on five campuses and one small secondary school. It is not impossible for System-wide thinking to result in a reduction in wasteful duplication of courses and resources. It will take initiative and leadership to bring about the change.

Create opportunities to develop leadership in the primary schools

Similarly, the primary school sector on Tongatapu could be re-structured. At present, there are six primary schools requiring, obviously, six principals. There is a dearth of suitable leaders for these schools and the principals usually teach full-time, with little or no opportunity to direct or mentor other teachers. One restructuring approach could be the arrangement of the six schools so that there were four country schools in a federation (with 300 pupils and 23 teachers - based on 2011 System figures) and the two city schools in a second federation (450 pupils and 25 teachers); see Table 12.

Table 12
Suggested Tongatapu primary school federations

Federation	Country School	City School
Principals	1	1
Campuses .	Nukunuku, ‘Utalau, Kolovai, Vaotu’u	Nuku’alofa Maamaloa
Senior teachers	4	2
Teachers	23	25
Pupils	300	450

Develop a district support model

Each federation would have a principal with no regular teaching role and each school would have a senior teacher. The senior teachers would have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the schools, the activity which Spillane and Diamond (2007) described as "management: the *maintenance* of current organisational arrangements and ways of doing business" (p. 4). The principals' role would be leadership which "involves influencing others to achieve, hopefully desirable, ends; it frequently involves initiating changes designed to achieve existing or new goals transforming existing ways, upsetting business as usual in schools and classrooms" (Spillane & Diamond p. 4). It would include all aspects of school operations and of mentoring inexperienced or struggling teachers. For the System, it would be simpler to find two suitable principals and six suitable senior teachers than it is to find six suitable principals. Of course, villagers would be unlikely to welcome what they would probably see as a 'downgrading' of their local school. Perhaps giving the senior teachers the title of 'manager' might soften the blow as well as differentiating constructively between the two roles.

Middle schools need to be reviewed

Little mention has been made of the System's middle schools. There are three of them in Tongatapu; all three of them are small and (during my visits, at least) showing little sign of expanding. In order to offer all of the courses they wish to provide, the schools are probably overstaffed. These schools have played a big role in Tongan education in the past but perhaps they have a limited future. Closing the schools would certainly result in a saving of resources, allowing for increased spending elsewhere, such as higher salaries for competent teachers, rationalising of courses in secondary schools and expenses for professional development.

Stated opinions of the Tongan education leaders are the dominant ones in this treatise and the leaders' belief that the System's teachers' classroom performance could be better is undoubted. Sometimes the views are clear and generally of a kind – two examples being the need for skilled leadership and the negative effects of having too many faifekau (church ministers) on staff. Other times, the views are strong but mixed – on one hand, for example, the need for the encouragement of innovation by teachers and, on the other, the force of conservative aspects of the culture.

Fatalism and the apparent inability to embrace useful planning will stand in the way of continuing improvement. There were many comments about the need for professional development for teachers but little about the role of senior officers (school-based and System-based) in encouraging and mentoring. Yet, experience in Tonga has shown me that the former without the latter can be a waste of resources.

The status quo is too strong

It comes back to leadership. Mention has already been made of Joseph Addison (1716): "When men are easy in their circumstances, they are naturally enemies to innovations". Two centuries later, Bernard Russell (1963) opined that "those who have power dread disturbance of the status quo, lest their privileges should be taken away" (p. 19). In the twenty first century, some Tongans seem to be saying something similar. If leaders really do want change, if they really do look for improvement in classroom teacher performance, they will need to become 'uneasy', to be innovative and to make positive and constructive use of one of the pervading aspects of Tongan culture –and the importance of noble rank.

If a principal or education officer is determined to bring about change, he/she is in a strong position to make sure it happens. But first, they need to attend to their own

professional development - to improve some planning, mentoring and other management and leadership skills and be prepared to follow through with their plans.

Balancing respect

It is assumed that Western educators are usually able to plan and use resources to achieve their goals. This is also the case with other educators from different cultures. It requires a logical, rational way of thinking but the motivation associated with that thinking may be different across cultures and the goals and strategies may be different (Makaet al., 2006). That is there is both intra and inter cultures differences. Tongans, leaders understand the present reality but they also c have a dream of what they would like in the future. Identifying and following a path between the two is not always easy (Makaet al., 2006). To improve teaching performance, leaders will have to act in a counter-culture manner. They have the great advantage, however, in that *faka'apa'apa* (respect) is one of the Four Core Values of their culture and if they make the most of that aspect wisely and consistently, they are more likely to bring about many of changes the educators seek.

Tongan Research

In terms of the challenges and education in Tonga it is the work of Thaman (2007) that has provides one of the better reviews of the Tonga education system and how it needs to progress. Thaman (2007) claimed that

> Schooling and the educational bureaucracy rely on universalism and impersonality; indigenous education systems rely on specific contexts and interpersonal relationships. Schooling promotes individual merit but indigenous education is based on the primacy of the group. The extent to which the school represents the cultures of Pacific Island communities continues to be minimal. … It is important for all those involved in schooling, especially teachers and those responsible for their education, to continue to re-think and re-examine their work (Thaman, 2007, p.59).

Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI)

There are however Tongans and others Pacific Island educators who want South Pacific schools to change. To this end there was a gathering at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji in 2001 to begin a process of re-thinking and redefining systems of education among their South Pacific countries (Fua, 2006; Maka et al., 2006). Thus was born the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI) which, among other achievements, resulted, in 2004, in a program to encourage Tongan *teachers* to conduct some local research projects. In addition the aim is to give educators in the south pacific a greater voice and say in how schooling should develop and be shaped in the South Pacific (Manathunga, 2009).

Certainly, the findings of this research study on Tongan school leadership and school change would support of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative.

The Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative projects covered the following topics:

1. teaching methodologies,
2. student learning,
3. administration and leadership,
4. vocational training / police training, and
5. assessment methodologies.

Fua (2006) described some of these projects and concludes: “Findings from these research projects should help teachers reflect on their practice. The papers presented should give other teachers practical ways of improving, or at least thinking about their practice” (p. 5).

The need to indigenise education research

During my five visits to Tonga a few years later, I heard nothing about these Rethinking Pacific Education Initiatives within the FWCT Education System. Placed in the context of research papers that aimed to better document initiatives in South Pacific schools the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative is providing one way that schools can rethink some of their practices within a South Pacific content. This need for documentation of local initiatives and research has been noted by Maka et al. (2006) and Thaman (2009). Thaman argued that South Pacific lead research has an important role in advancing and 'indigenising' education in the South Pacific. Thaman (2009) again:

> Research is an important consideration in any attempt to make teaching and learning more culturally inclusive in the Pacific. Research has always been a challenge to Pacific educators as up until recently, there was no serious challenging of the unilateral assumptions of a universal model of research. (Pacific graduates) realised that European-derived systems and frameworks of research did not have the concepts by which their experiences and realities could be appropriately represented, named, described and understood (Thaman, 2009, p. 5).

Thaman went on to suggest and detail some suitable Pacific research frameworks – Kakala (described in Chapter 1 of this thesis), Fa'afaletui, Kurakaupapa Maori, Tivaevae and Vanua —and indicated some of the Pacific (but not necessarily Tongan) researchers who have used them. Thaman and other Pacific educators have been discussed in the early chapter of this thesis, but the significance of their work is reinforced when much of what they were concerned about was also identified in this research. In particular:

- a shortage of qualified teachers to teach in specific subject areas, such as mathematics (Tatafu, Booth, & Wilson, 2000);
- a curriculum that poorly matches the needs of the students, particularly in the secondary schools (Pohiva, 2014),

- limited professional development and upskilling of teachers in the schools (Finau, 2017; Tatafu et al., 2000);
- an inadequate Tonga teacher preparation program (Finau, 2017).

As has been stated several times throughout this thesis, the views of Tongan education leaders are the key views if the desired changes are to be brought about. Outsiders are unlikely to understand the cultural complexities involved. That is probably why earlier attempts by outsiders to review the System and plan for its future has made little or no impact.

Working from within to change

Palangis (Westerners) are likely to be surprised at the at times lack of Tongan interest in matters such as accountability for finances and for teaching and learning; similarly, the dearth and underuse of books and other learning resources might surprise a visitor; the uninspiring learning environment and its poor maintenance would not impress a Western educator and some of the effects of kava-drinking would probably cause concern. These matters might be perceived by outsiders as significant if there is to be an improvement in teaching practice. The need, however, is to recognise that school change is more likely to be successful if it is driven from within the cultural group that the school is located (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; McCoy & Havea, 2006).

Many of the teachers interviewed were concerned about the negative aspects of the Tongan schooling and culture. They also wanted the children they were teaching to grow up to be productive and positive citizens of the future. The teachers did care about the students and the students' families and they were aware that they had to prepare the children they were teaching to fit into the Tongan culture that was under pressure from the Western influences.

The Tongan teachers could articulate how the educational system could be improved and they could balance this within the large Tongan culture context. To change some elements of local practice which are important to Tongans might be missed. For instance, the number of faifekau and their adverse effect on school staffs would not be obvious after a cursory glance. Yet, Tongans are aware of their considerable negative impact (e.g. *[M] I would like fewer faifekau. Are they good examples? They are not.*). The basic importance of 'belonging' is not always obvious but being part of a family and a village is vital to a Tongan (e.g. *[F] Tongans find it difficult to be called outcasts or to not belong.*). Related to that are the frequent references during interviews, to the need to attend funerals (e.g. *[E] They take time off to go to a funeral, something big in our culture.*). Further, it is difficult for young, enthusiastic teachers (or, for that matter, any other teacher) to show initiative (e.g. *[K] Anybody who tried to put his head above the parapet gets slapped down very quickly to keep quiet.*). Also not immediately obvious to an outsider is the effect on teachers of their poverty and of their need to have other employment, thus reducing their commitment to their teaching roles (e.g. *[G] They are thinking of other jobs; they just wait here and do nothing.*). All these are examples of the way visiting outsiders can miss important aspects of Tongan culture which can affect teaching performance.

Hofstede (1980) pointed out that many aspects of culture, iceberg-like, are largely out of sight. The Tongan interviewees spoke of the ways in which these aspects of their culture, along with the respect for high rank, can affect teachers' classroom skills and they are not always apparent to an outsider, as indicated in Figure 28 in the Way of Life section of Chapter 4, Part C, of this thesis.

Perhaps the most significant aspect affecting performance is Nobel rank and its requirement for respect – faka'apa'apa. This is an all-pervading part of life in Tonga which sometimes is obvious but, most often, is hidden to outsiders by a veneer of friendliness and

politeness. McCoy and Havea (2006) noted that: “Since palangis do not have ‘honouring rank’ in their awareness of what life is all about, it takes them a long time to understand why Tongans behave the way they do” (p. 9). So, it takes Tongans to identify this aspect of culture and the way it can vitiate improvement. On the other hand, Tongans can acknowledge the way in which this same aspect can stimulate action for improvement in teaching performance if it is perceived to be crucial (e.g. *[F] You go everywhere, there’s a ‘king’ … You can bring about change if you are the ‘king’.*).

Change is occurring and cannot be held back

Even so, change is occurring as the Tongans and other Pacific Island counties are needing to operate more and more within a Western economic context that is focussed on income, accountability, and technology (Maka et al., 2006; McCoy & Havea, 2006; Tikoduadua, 2014). Change, however, is rarely a painless process. Change presupposes some reallocation of power and resources (Marshall, 2006). Every change requires sacrifice and effort. If the System is to undergo the sometimes wrenching reforms that are needed, the social fabric is in danger of being stretched. The success of a change process, especially in Tonga, will depend on the leader – the ‘king’.

> We stand now at a critical moment in the history of our social pilgrimage and development as a people. During this period (the past 150 years) we’ve become modernised through Western education and Christianisation. Despite the inequities displayed over the years by human frailties and failures, we’ve been able to set up a system that has taken our people from the rule of the jungle to the rule of law and have enjoyed somewhat a fellowship among equals with the nations of the modern world (Moala, 2009, p. 141).

The outer ‘rings’ of Bronfenbrenner’s (1978) ecological model referred to the stable, slowly evolving characteristics of Tongan society and culture. Even though, by comparison with the more personal, more changeable characteristics of the inner rings, they change slowly, imperceptibly even, they do change.

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System has the capacity to change and the interviewees, all of them senior participants in the System, believe that it should and can, especially in the area of teacher performance. It depends on the participants to bring it about. The participatory action research approach used for this thesis involved the leaders in all stages – observation, action, planning, reflecting and so on in a cyclic fashion. They demonstrated that they can see the issues and that they have the potential to bring about changes they desire.

It is hoped that Hofstede's (1980) somewhat depressing conclusion that "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy; cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster" (Retrieved from http:/www.geert-hofstede.com/) proves less definitive than Samate's (2007) affirmation that "Our (Tongans') past, which has to do with our traditional culture, is to be treasured as long as we are not prisoners of it. It should inform the present and positively shape the future" (p. 55).

The search for an acceptable point on the continuum between homeostasis and excessive dynamism will not be simple, discomfort-free or without considerable tension but it is not an impossible dream.

There cannot be a neat, convenient conclusion to this action research, this thesis. It concerns change, change to be brought about by people for whom planned change is not an easy path to follow. Outsiders have a minor role only on this path for as an interviewee, *[A]*, observed, "The Western system can't be imposed and Tongans won't let it be imposed. Give it (ideas and plans) to the Tongan leaders and let them do with it what they would, or not do anything with it. The underlying thing is Tongans have to take the reins of their education system".

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory and barriers

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory describes the structure of a society and the links and barriers among layers are made clear. Hofstede explains the huge differences between societies where individuals are most important and those where collectivism is the norm; he also wrote of the fact that many characteristics of a culture are not visible at first glance. The Chadwick and Valenzuela (2006) depiction points to the gap which needs to be crossed if the members of one culture wish theirs to be more like another's.

The leaders of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System have a long and difficult road ahead if they are to modernise their system. They are the only people who can do it.

Action research and the final word

The usefulness and validity of action research is one of the findings in this research. This longitudinal social science research study and its findings fit well within the interpretative paradigm as agued by action researchers (i.e., Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cook, 2006; Hien, 2009; Morrison et al., 2017). This research has not taken the positivist paradigm because there is no one variable that can be easily isolated and so explain the complex human interactions that were observed and studied over my period of time in Tonga. This study has taken an action research perspective, because it wanted to better understanding and with input from the stakeholder work towards ameliorating the tensions between local cultural issues and globalisation so that the Tongan school leaders can blend the best of Westerner focussed education and practice with the best of the Tongan culture practices. This is not the first study to do this within an educational context but its methodology, aims and findings lend support to the statement by Burnett and Lingam (2012, p. 221):

> that a Pacific education system underpinned by socially-critical theoretical perspectives, particularly deconstructive ones, can better respond to the twin challenges of creating universal and equitable access to education and arresting the loss of language, culture, identity, and life skills via rapid globalization.

A concluding observation on what we see is culturally influenced

I have included at the end of this reflective chapter an imagined conversation between the head of the Education System and a Western consultant. The section is called "*Quo Vadis?*" which may be translated roughly as "What is the next step?" It seems to me that, in an oral culture such as Tonga's, a conversation (even an imagined one) is an appropriate way to finish.

Before that, however, the following vignette is an astronomical analogy which explains the significance of the Crux and ducks alluded to in the imagined conversation. It indicates the differences which cultural mindsets can bring to any reality. In the Western/Tongan situation, for instance, while one person will see enthusiasm, another will see disrespect; where one person will see physical abuse, the other will see appropriate discipline; while one person sees nepotism, the other will see loyalty. It is unlikely that change can be led by outsiders with a different mindset; all they can do is support.

Vignette 13 Crux and Ducks

Crux and Ducks

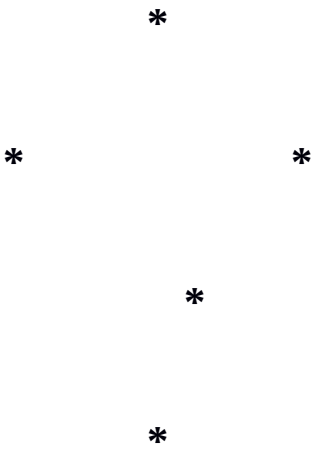
When seafarers from the Northern Hemisphere first sailed into the South Pacific, they became aware of a constellation of stars which appeared in a configuration with which they were familiar. They called it the Southern Cross (or Crux).

Centuries before, Tongans were aware of the same constellation and saw a configuration with which *they* were familiar. They called it Toloa, a wild duck flying with neck outstretched. Two other groups of stars were also called Toloa (or ducks).

Two cultures.

One physical reality.

Two perceptions of that reality.



PART B – QUO VADIS? : AN IMAGINED CONVERSATION.

This following hypothesised conversation is in part based on my experience and reflects the notion that culture is the lens in which individuals perceive their world and their relationships with others. A core theme and finding of this thesis is that culture is a lens that enables the actions of others to be better comprehended and if need be changed, but there are costs and even resistance from different individuals if those wanting change do not recognise the culture of those involved. The fact that different individuals perceive their world differently from an outsider's perception does not make their perceptions or actions incorrect or wrong. The need it to try to find the common and shared vision where the two cultures can respect each other and collaborate.

During the early evening, as was their custom, Samesi, the President of the FWCT Education System and John, an Australian consultant, went for a walk around the national rugby stadium in Nuku'alofa.

As the two men walked lap after lap, they spoke of mundane matters for a while. Then the conversation moved to the subject of the stars that were now appearing in the darkening sky. The walkers noted particularly the brightness of Venus, the 'Evening Star', as it sank towards the Western horizon.

Then, Samesi stopped for a moment and asked "So John, you've been here to Tonga a few times now and have learned plenty about us; our culture, our customs, our religion, our education system. You must by now have some ideas about how we can improve the teaching that goes on in our classrooms."

"Well, yes," answered John carefully as the two started walking again, "and I guess the main thing I've learned is that, if there is going to be any improvement, it

has to start with Tongans, especially the education leaders. There is no way that a palangi can come here, even for long periods of time, understand the intricacies and nuances of your culture as well as the education system and come up with a simple solution. So, that is why, as well as observing what goes on in the schools, I've been talking to a number of principals, deputies and education officers about changes.

"As you know, when I first arrived, I prepared a strategic plan which could have helped improvement to take place – but in a Western environment. It will take Tongans *to bring about improvement in a* Tongan *environment."*

Samesi pondered this. "But you palangis know all about your system and you can help us to lift our game, become a little like you, plan better," he protested.

"Your colleagues have made it clear to me, Samesi, that it is not just a matter of me suggesting a change and assuming that it will happen. You talk of planning, for instance. A wise man once said something like 'Culture eats planning for breakfast'".

"Are you saying there's nothing we can do because our culture gets in the way?"

"Not at all, Samesi. I am suggesting, though, that you have to consider the Tongan culture if you want to change any aspect of the Tongan education system. You can't just assume that the palangi way, the Western system, can be simply transferred to here."

"Umm!" pondered the President. "So, where do I start, John? Any ideas?"

"Well, if there is going to be change, you probably need to create the climate for change. And start with something that you actually can do fairly easily.

"For instance, you have so many faifekau in the System and, according to most of the people I've spoken to, they do more harm than good. They are not good role models, it seems. So, convince the Head of the Church not to ordain any more. By doing that, you achieve two important things; firstly, you reduce one of the problems affecting the attitude of teachers and that is something which many of your colleagues see as the biggest obstacle to teaching improvement and, secondly, you start to create the climate for change that you are going to need."

Samesi was silent for a while. "Won't be easy," he said, "but it makes sense. Anything else that I can do in the near future?"

"Well, the secondary principals have been talking for several years about the need to rationalise their courses and resources. But they won't show the initiative needed to bring this about; they are waiting for somebody to take the lead. That's where you come in. Sit down with a couple of them and discuss an obvious starting point. Perhaps, for instance, talk about the fact that there are only eight pupils studying Forms 11 and 12 history over five different campuses – discuss ways to rationalise the situation. Another example – vocational training is important for many of your pupils; you can have a relevant and realistic curriculum in that area. But, as you know, a properly equipped woodwork workshop, for example, is expensive to set up. So, amalgamate what there is now; have one good workshop instead of having four that are not much good. And then put your best woodwork teacher in charge of it and find a way to transport pupils to it; you'll find that you don't need the other, less competent, teachers. It will be cheaper and more effective, in the long run, than what there is available now."

"And I guess that that would help this climate of change that you are talking about".

"Exactly. Another thing you can do fairly easily. You can ensure that new teachers are stationed together so that they can support each other. As it is at the moment, a new teacher, full of ideas and enthusiasm, will quickly be drawn in to the prevailing ethos. Peer pressure and respect for older teachers are strong influences. Find ways to give them a chance to show initiative. Give those new teachers a chance to grow; put them together so that they can encourage and support each other. While you are doing that, you can introduce some other changes that we can talk about. And plan for!"

"Such as …?"

"Well, something that came across very strongly during my conversations with your colleagues is the need for a really good professional development program".

"We have that now. People such as yourself come and give us some good training".

"That's true, but it is too hit-and-miss. One of the people I interviewed told me quite clearly that when we palangis leave, everyone goes straight back to doing what they were doing before we came.

"What I believe might be most helpful is a long-term, well-planned, continuing, Tongan *program of professional development or even a Pacific program, for teachers but also for principals. A program that is planned and delivered by Tongan or Pacific educators, possibly with a little palangi help at first. It won't end*

up the same as we might do it in Australia, but it might be more relevant and realistic for the situation here. I realise that this will need to be face-to-face. Courses from books or on-line learning for teachers are not likely to be very effective in a Tongan setting, partly because yours is an oral culture rather than a written one and partly because of the technical difficulties involved. It won't be just a matter of offering something, though. You will need to make it possible and even essential for teachers to be involved and to demonstrate improvement".

"How could we do that?"

"For a start, it must be physically and financially possible for a teacher to attend a training session. That might mean that it is offered not just in head office but in individual schools. Train the principals to train the teachers, for example. Teach them to be good mentors."

"That sounds like a good idea and I remember you giving me some ideas about that last year."

"And then, expect consequences; expect that principals and teachers regularly use their newly-acquired skills; link that to their continued employment and salary levels."

"Yes", replied Samesi, "but there will be plenty of resistance. Ours is a very conservative society. Some of these teachers are friends or relatives and we look after each other. It will mean changing our culture and that will hurt."

"Well, changes have happened before and I guess that it hasn't been easy on those occasions. Think of the effect the missionaries had a couple of centuries ago. Think of the effect easy travel has made in the past few decades. Think of the effect

modern technology is having on the Tongan culture right now. Remember your logo – the hermit crab can change its shell when the right time has come."

"*That's true".*

"*For instance, take the example of what has been happening here regarding kindergartens. They are proving to be a great success."*

"*Really? In what way?"*

"*In several ways – teachers are being trained and there is regular professional development, there is positive interaction between teachers and parents and lots of contact with education officers, there are some plans for the future, people feel good about it. It's a success. And it wasn't like that a couple of years ago. Then it was mainly a few mums together looking after their kids for a few hours. Now you have a network of trained, professional kindergartens of which you can be proud."*

"*Yes, I can see that. It's good."*

"*And it has come about largely because of the enthusiasm and skill of one education officer. She has been a wonderful example of how one person can start to bring about change, to inspire others. But you have to keep the momentum going. You and other leaders in the church and in the education system. Getting back to the hermit crab and how it can change, you can use the biggest plus in your armoury of change agents, not just with kindergartens but with every part of the System."*

"*What's that?" asked Samesi with some surprise.*

"*One of the most important aspects of Tongan culture. Respect for your position, your rank. That might not work in palangiland but it will here. Instead of*

just enjoying the perks, the privileges of your position, use *your position. Teachers and principals are waiting for you to give some leadership. If you really do want to see some improvement in what happens in classrooms, use your strength, use faka'apa'apa. There's a good chance that they'll follow. Be the leader."*

The President of Education was deep in thought and the two men walked silently for a while.

"Anything else to suggest?" Samesi asked.

After a moment, the consultant mentioned the negative effect of too much kava on teachers, especially the way the drinkers often fell asleep at the desks the next day. He pondered the desirability of urging teachers to drink kava only over the weekends.

Samesi shook with laughter at this suggestion and looked towards the southern sky.

"John", he said, "What is the name of that constellation of stars up there? It seems to have two bright stars pointing to it. Is that the Crux or one of the ducks?"

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Appendix A

Ethics approval form

and

Appendix B

Letter of support from President, FWCTES

Social Science Ethics Officer
Private Bag 01 Hobart
Tasmania 7001 Australia
Tel: (03) 6226 2763
Fax: (03) 6226 7148
Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

UTAS

19 September 2013

Professor Ian Hay
Faculty of Education
Locked Bag 1308

Student Researcher: John Phelps

Sent via email

Dear Professor Hay

Re: MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: **H0013524 - Tongan culture's influence on teacher development**

We are pleased to advise that acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 17 September 2013.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.

3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.

5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**

6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Shaw
Ethics Officer
Tasmania Social Sciences HREC

FREE WESLEYAN CHURCH
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN TONGA

OFFICE OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 57, NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA

President of Education: Rev Alifeleti Atiola

Phone: (676) 24-934
Fax: (676) 26-526

21st May 2013

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Support for the Research Project of Mr John Phelps

Mr John Phelps has been a visiting consultant to our Education System for more than four years now, which involves several trips to Tonga conducting reviews, workshops, seminars and trainings.

He has produced valuable documents as a result of those visits which are treasured and widely consulted by our Education System. The next proposed visit will also accommodate John's research into the impact of Tongan Culture in teaching and learning. This will be part of his doctoral thesis.

I write to affirm our support for this project and to say that our staff will be available for interviews and our properties are readily accessible to Mr Phelps' research activities.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

'Alifeleti 'Atiola
President of Education

Appendix C

Interview information sheet

and

Appendix D

Participant consent form

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

TONGAN CULTURE'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Information Sheet

This information sheet is for interviewees, FWCT Education System leaders.

Invitation

We invite you to participate in a research study to investigate the influence of Tongan culture on the professional development of teachers in the System.

This study is being conducted as part of a project leading to a Doctor of Education degree. The student investigator is William John Phelps and he is supported in the study by Chief Investigator Professor Ian Hay and Faculty of Education lecturer, Professor David Kember.

We would greatly value and appreciate your participation in an interview which should take about one hour of your time.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study investigates the impact of Tongan culture on the development of classroom teaching performance of teachers in the FWCT Education System.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a leader in the System and you have a knowledge and understanding of the culture of Tonga.

You have been chosen on a random basis from among the System's education leaders.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate and your participation will remain confidential.

What will you be asked to do?

You will be asked to be interviewed by John Phelps in a single one-to-one meeting. The interview will occur in a place of your choice. It might be in the school where you work, in the System's head office or anywhere else you choose.

John will ask you some questions about your vision for the future of the System and about the influence the Tongan culture might have on the reform of classroom teaching performance. The interviews will be recorded and later transcribed.

Please note that the interviews will not have any questions which will directly identify your name or school.

Are there any benefits from participation in the study?

The main aim of the study is to give the leaders in the FWCT Education System some information about how they and their colleagues believe their culture influences teacher development. When it is finished, it is hoped that those leaders will be equipped to manage the professional development of the System's teachers to the greatest possible advantage.

Are there any possible risks from participation in the study?

We do not foresee any risks from participation in the study but please let us know if you have any concerns.

What if you change your mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time, and may do so without providing an explanation. There are no repercussions or consequences in withdrawing from the study. If you choose to withdraw, relevant data (such as an interview recording) will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information when the study is complete?

All raw data must be held by the University of Tasmania for at least five years and will then be destroyed.

All data will be treated in a confidential manner.

How will the results of the study be published?

The results of the study will be part of a Doctor of Education research thesis which will be publicly available through the University of Tasmania Library. A copy of the publication will be located in the library in the head office of the FWCT Education System and will be available for perusal by leaders and teachers within the System.

Participants will not be identifiable in the publication.

What if you have any questions about the study?

If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the following people by email:

Chief Investigator	Co-Investigator	Student Investigator
Professor Ian Hay	Professor David Kember	Mr John Phelps
ian.hay@utas.edu.au	david.kember@utas.edu.au	tabphel@hotmail.com

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network at human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants.

This information is for you to keep. If you choose to participate in the study you will be asked to complete a written consent form at the time of the interview.

Thankyou for your time.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

TONGAN CULTURE'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Participant Consent Form

Name of participant: .....

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves me in an interview of about one hour when I will be asked my views about the influence of Tongan culture on the development of teachers in the FWCT Education System.
5. I understand that participation involves no foreseeable risk to my employment within the System.
6. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for a period of five years and will then be destroyed.
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
10. I agree to participate in this investigation and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if so wish may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research.

Participant's signature : .....

Statement by Investigator

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Investigator's name : William John Phelps

Investigator's signature : .....

Appendix E

List of interview questions

List of interview questions

- How are things going in your school (the System) at the moment?
- How well do you think the teachers in your school (the System) are doing?
- How would you like it to be in a year's time; three years; ten years?
- In your vision, what would you like your teachers (principals) to be able to do?
- Can you think of anything which might help or prevent the teachers (principals) becoming like that?
- How do you think Tongan culture can help your vision for the school (System) coming about?
- How do you think Tongan culture can get in the way of your vision coming about?
- Tell me about teachers' attitudes and how they might affect your vision becoming a reality.
- How about leadership?
- How does fatalism affect the situation?
- What other aspects of Tongan culture might affect your vision?
- What do you think you can do to help bring about the school (System) you would like to see in the future?

Appendix F

FWCT Education System organizational structure

FWC Department of Education Organizational Structure, 2012